

# Zionism, An Indigenous Struggle: Aboriginal Americans and the Jewish State

*Israzine* No. 4 Vol. 48

[Introduction: Nathan Elberg](#)

[1-The Convergence of the Native American and Jewish Narratives in our Times: Jay Corwin](#)

[2-There is no Palestine, There are no Palestinians: Dr. David A. Yeagley](#)

[3-David Ahenakew and His Antisemitism: Ira Robinson](#)

[4-The Indigenous Rights of the Jewish People: Alan Baker](#)

[5-What it Means to be an Oglala Sioux Jewish Woman: A Personal Account: Mara Cohen](#)

[6-Uqittuk Mark: Inuit Defender of Israel: as told to Machla Abramovitz](#)

[7-Conversation with a Metis About Israel: Ryan Bellerose](#)

[8-Savage and Jew: A Shared Stereotype: Howard I. Schwartz](#)

[9-Simple Truths: A Cree Indian Explains a 2,000 Year Old Rabbinic Teaching: Nathan Elberg](#)



**In 1968, Palestinian terrorists hijacked an El-Al plane, and got away with it. They used the tactic repeatedly after that, with varying degrees of success. The most infamous incident was the forcing of Air France plane to Entebbe, Uganda, and Israel's successful rescue of the hostages.**

More such rescue operations are required these days, but not of aircraft. The Palestinians and their Islamist allies have taken to hijacking peoples and causes. For example, [in nineteen seventy five Betty Friedan, a feminist trailblazer, led the American delegation](#) to an International Woman's Year World Conference. She was stunned by the conference's anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism. A 1980 Women's Conference in Copenhagen had a huge portrait of Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini, a man at the forefront of the oppression of women, decorating the conference chamber.

Although Israel is the only place in the Middle East where homosexuals are legally protected from persecution, Toronto's annual gay pride parade has [frequently featured the participation](#) of "Queers Against Israeli Apartheid." That homosexuals would promote a movement that brutally oppresses them points to the effectiveness of Palestinian hijacking techniques.

The collection of articles in this publication examine the relation between Native American and Jewish issues, focusing on the perceived attempt to hijack the Native American struggle for rights and recognition into the framework of Palestinian suffering. Native Americans are viewed as the quintessential victims, having suffered genocide, theft of lands and consequent marginalization. This fits into the casting of the Palestinians as victims of colonialism and oppression.

The hijacking doesn't just take place through protest marches and conferences. A Wisconsin Ojibwa Indian told me of her fear of the inroads Muslims have made in the local native communities, marrying Indian women and then using their new status to gain influence in native affairs and policies. An expert in Southwest Indian art claims that Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian Arabs have

been buying native art businesses in Arizona and New Mexico, then selling “Navajo” art made in the Philippines. When I asked him to write about this for our publication he refused, not even wanting his name mentioned. “People have been killed,” he explained.

The left has long revered the oppression of native peoples, and tried to make the most of it. Pretend Indians such as Ward Churchill and Elizabeth Warren used ostensible native identity to advance their careers. [Steven Salaita](#), a minor academic who has written peans glorifying Palestinian suffering was supposed to join the American Indian studies program at the University of Illinois; his overt anti-Semitism got in the way.

Also getting in the way is that many Native Americans aren’t interested in perpetually playing the victim. It doesn’t fit their traditions or values. And while they may have been downtrodden in the past, they don’t want that to define their future. They want to make their own lives.

The Navajo, for example want to improve the efficiency of their agriculture. We provide a link below on how the Navajo nation is working with Israel to improve its expertise on efficient irrigation in an arid climate.

Other Native Americans are businessmen, professionals. Many, both men and women, have served in the military, and cannot accept the reflexive anti-Americanism of the Palestinian agenda. Many are devout Christians, and cannot accept the Muslim agenda. But more than that, they are themselves. Native Americans are not anybody else’s stooge or weapon. The attention from the left may be enjoyable for a time, but ultimately it is another form of cooption, another form of exploitation. The Palestinians may claim that they are “indigenous,” but as our contributors deftly show, there is no moral or historical equivalency with Native Americans.

\*\*\*

Most popular opinion agrees that mankind has a common place of origin, whether in the [Garden of Eden](#) in some unknown location between the Tigris and Euphrates, or [somewhere in Africa](#). If you go back far enough, everybody on earth has common indigenous roots.

It’s when we start going only part way back that things get more complicated. Populations have never been stable. The Bible (cf. eg. 2Kings 17) tells us how the Assyrians displaced whole nations, replacing them with populations from elsewhere. If we prefer non-Biblical sources, speakers of the Turkic language group (Ottoman Empire) can be found far from their Turkish homeland, in [China](#) and [Siberia](#), where they are now indigenous peoples.

Examples can be found in North America as well, such as the [disappearance of the Tunnit \(Dorset\)](#) peoples of the north, displaced by Inuit and Indians. The Cheyenne were pushed out of the Great Lakes area, in turn coming into conflict with other Native Americans and of course the U.S. Army. The Inuit battled the Ojibwa, Cree and Athabaskan Indians for territory. [Warfare and population transfer happened](#) both before and after the onset European colonization. Are Native Americans indigenous to the specific places they now inhabit? A bigger question is “does this matter?”

If we adopt a synchronic criterion of indigenous status, that is, a definition at a specific point of time, then everyone and no one is indigenous. Whether we shout “1967,” “1948,” “1867” (Canada’s independence from Britain), “1763” or “1492,” we run into problems when indigenous status reflects a particular slice of time. This simplistic approach may be useful for sloganeering, but our contributors take a more sophisticated approach.

Ryan Bellerose and David Yeagley, each coming from opposing sides of the political spectrum, observe how Native American rights are an attractive issue used to legitimate other causes. Many movements have tried to appropriate or incorporate oppression of Native Americans into their own causes. As Margaret Atwood pointed out in [Survival](#), her guide to Canadian literature, the Indians have become the quintessential victims, doomed to forever remain so. Jay Corwin uses a literary approach to negate the victim/perpetrator narrative as it constrains both Native Americans and Jews, relegating them to a mythological realm. As characters in such a realm, both Jews and Native Americans are condemned, unable to act to bring about their freedom. Perhaps the real sin of Israel in the eyes of the world’s media is its refusal to abide by the rules of fantasy. According to this paradigm, Israel has no right to return fire when it’s attacked. Fantasy characters don’t carry real guns. Bellerose, Yeagley and Corwin argue that refusing to be a victim doesn’t make one into an oppressor. The attempted appropriation of Native American issues is form of exploitation.

In his “conversation with an Indian friend,” Bellerose lays out the misconceptions that facilitate lumping Israel and the Jews with the oppressors of Native Americans. Once that grouping is made, it’s easier to build Native solidarity with other people who claim to be victims of the same oppressors.

Robinson discusses the ultimate expression of those misconceptions in his account of the Ahenakew affair. David Ahenakew was an important Native American leader, earning the Order of Canada for his achievements on their behalf. He was also a rabid anti-Semite, schooled in hatred in both Germany and Gaza. He was ultimately stripped of the Order of Canada, and his racism denounced by other native leaders.

Ambassador Baker, in his article [The Indigenous Rights of the Jewish People](#), explains the significance of a people being indigenous, in terms of history, politics and law. He uses this to

examine concepts of legality and illegality of the presence of Jews in various parts of Israel, rejecting nomenclature that delegitimizes that presence.

Uqittuk Mark's connection to Israel is Biblical, rather than political. A devout Christian, he went on an organized Israel pilgrimage to see the land of the Bible. His attachment to the land transcends the politics, while his experience as an Inuk (Eskimo) gives him a clearer perspective to understand the struggles over it.

Finally, while Palestinians and their supporters work hard to appropriate Native American identity and victimhood, Howard Schwartz explains why the early European colonists were convinced that the native people they found in North America actually were Jews: descendants of the Ten Lost Tribes. Schwartz explains the ideology which led the colonists to interpret native culture as primitive Judaism, and then ultimately reject that interpretation when its implications became clear.

Nathan Elberg spent a winter trapping with Cree Indians in northern Quebec. He writes in the Charivari section how his hosts helped him understand a two-thousand year old Rabbinic teaching.

Nathan Elberg

*Guest editor Nathan Elberg is Chairman of the International Board of Directors of the Canadian Institute for Jewish Research. He is a commercial real estate broker who has hunted and trapped with Eskimos and Indians, negotiated multimillion-dollar transactions, traveled the Trans-Canada Highway with hobos, and lived in a tipi at -40C. He's given expert testimony to the CRTC (Canadian version of FCC), and brought a group of Eskimos to address a provincial parliament.*

*He has an MA in Anthropology, and is doing a PhD in Religion. He's studied primitive warfare, cannibalism, shamanism, Kabbalah, Talmud, primitive art, and communications among other things. His web blog can be found at [www.quantumcannibals.com](http://www.quantumcannibals.com)*

*Machla Abramovitz*

[Contents](#)

## MAIN ARTICLES

### **Op-Ed: Israel: The World's First Modern Indigenous State by Ryan Bellerose**

*I am Métis from the Paddle Prairie Metis settlement in Northern Alberta Canada. I founded Canadians For Accountability, a native rights advocacy group, and I am an organizer and participant in the Idle No More movement in Calgary. I am a founding member of an Israeli advocacy group called Calgary United with Israel. And I am a Zionist.*



### **The Convergence of the Native American and Jewish Narratives in our Times**

**by Jay Corwin**

In considering the convergence of Jewish and Native American experiences, I may be uniquely suited to this task because my mother was Tlingit of the eagle moiety and the kaayaash keiditaan clan, and my father was Jewish. His father was from Brzesko and his mother from Sniatyn in Galitzia. I am acquainted with both cultures but was born and brought up in Lingít áani, Tlingit territory in Alaska, with my maternal family, and that is my home. I have deep feelings for Jews and for Israel, as

relatives and as part of my ancestry. I am also an academic, specialized in Spanish and Latin American literature, and it is from a literary sense that I view these convergences of culture and experience.

The first commonalities that come to mind naturally are mass deportations, genocide, harassment and victimization of all types. Native Americans have for some time been projected as exotic philosophical victims of their own timeless reality. According to a student of mine at University of Cape Town, Native Americans perceive time differently from Europeans. His professor of Anthropology had stated as much, quoting from some particular expert on the subject. I mentioned that the Mayan calendar is more accurate than any other, which contradicted his professor's idiotic visions of a people living in a time zone that doesn't exist. I mentioned that my mother and my grandmother didn't have that peculiar perception of time, to which he answered that that they must have been westernised. It took me a few minutes to understand how he could have been so lacking in scepticism and reason that he could look at someone with obvious Native American features but deny him his personal experience. It was because he was misled by the romantic fantasies of a third-rate thinker with the title "professor." It is on this point that contemporary Jewish and Native American experiences converge wherein professors, journalists and politicians present a condescending pseudo-anthropological vision of both groups without questioning their presumed unspoken right to pontificate about every aspect of both peoples' existence, including where they should and should not live. I believe the real nature of this pathological desire to issue decrees stems from a simple religious narrative, the Christian depiction of Jesus, and the subsequent roles assigned by Europeans to themselves and others in our contemporary political reality.

Native Americans are seen by liberals as the perpetual victim, the sob story of the Americas, the gentle red-skinned people who met Columbus and the Mayflower Pilgrims, whose hospitality was recompensed with treachery and violence, the long dead heroes of Thanksgiving. And then there is the grand Hollywood narrative of the Great Plains, replete with Italians in cheap wigs and bad makeup that evolved into the equally dreadful "Dances with Wolves," that self-serving fantasy of "the Good White Man" who has come to save the people. Transfer the characters to another place and time, and we have "Lawrence of Arabia," the British equivalent. Both are recycled *Lord Jim* fantasies wherein a god-like European finds himself revered by little brown people. And both are reinventions of the Jesus story, European style, in which the blonde haired, blue eyed Jesus is killed by the people he has tried to save.

Martyrdom is evident in the story of Jesus, and it has crept into fiction, where it is a sin that condemns a novel or short story to second rate status. It also constitutes a kind of generic formula in the media. There are probably many reasons for that. I suspect that the main one is that media moguls and journalists understand that to make money their task is to manipulate the naïve, not to record history as it occurs. It is an infantile polarization of Good and Evil, a reductionist, condescending narrative technique that serves as a basis for mass media reports. One may only be a hero, a victim or a villain in the comic book realm. In popular media, victims and perpetrators are presented, and the journalist and activists assume the role of Superman. And the media is well aware of it. It feeds on the public's longing for a dark, simplistic narrative strategy, inducing in the audience the cheap middle class thrill of righteous indignation.

In today's narrative, Native Americans are placed on the margins, perhaps beyond victimhood. Native Americans are not allowed an equal voice, and never equal footing. I recall a conference in Spain on the indigenous mythology in Latin American fiction, my precise field of expertise. A professor and keynote speaker, a European, had in the course of his presentation presented an analysis of an aboriginal work of literature, most of which hinged on the meaning of a Quechua word. After he finished speaking, a Peruvian professor challenged his interpretation, explaining that the Quechua word, upon which it was based, had more than one meaning. Another Peruvian concurred and the two began discussing the point in Quechua, their native language. The keynote lecturer turned red and in an angry hostile tone rejected their correction, stating that he had worked with "those people" for over ten years, of course taking ownership of the word and the people. He had probably not counted on the presence of native Quechua speakers in the audience, for how could such humble people be educated, let alone equal to other literary scholars such as himself? I was disappointed to find at such a conference that not one of the keynote speakers was indigenous. What I witnessed was likely a direct result of the European narrative, possibly because that speaker had been induced into this version of literary reality as a child through Karl May's eponymous fantasy novels of a romanticized Navaho named Winnetou.

I am certain that the man who offered the correction was aware of my unique background. Just after this exchange and without his having asked, I brought him a bottle of water from a vending machine. That isn't something a European would very likely do. (For aboriginals, doing so is a sign of respect for someone who is older as well as an acknowledgement of his linguistic expertise and his rank as a distinguished professor and authority on his language (Quechua). Simply nodding is not enough whereas bringing someone a drink in this context is a sign of servitude.) This was also a subtle nod to him that I also acknowledged his victory over an under-prepared opponent.

That anecdote is also illustrative of the victim/perpetrator narrative. Because, while the victim is pitied, he may never be equal, and for him to ask for or demand equality means the end of victimhood. The speaker's refusal to acknowledge the correction was not just an indication of his arrogance (after all, how could *he* be wrong, as he had studied and therefore *owned* those people) but a reminder to us aboriginals that we are only to be pitied. In a sense, this is a repetition of the story of the crucifixion, the religious subtext to all contemporary European political thought. In other words it is simply not possible for ethnic Europeans to remove themselves from their depiction of Jesus. Victims are not allowed to play any other role, because then it spoils the entire fantasy, and moreover, he is not entitled to be Jewish: to skirt that minor problem he is relegated like Native Americans to the mythological realm of a non-existent time zone, ascending to Heaven and returning, and presented as one who is closer to God than others and therefore no longer human. The image of the crucified Christ, a misunderstood philosophical being who lived in his own timelessness, is identical to the insulting mythologized cliché of Chief Joseph, who said "I will fight no more forever." The false ascription of a lyrical philosopher comes through people too thick to understand that the man was only saying "I will not fight any longer" in a language he hadn't mastered.

Of course in this narrative and in European passion plays evil is incarnate in the Jews. It is the basis of much small-minded European racism. Europe could not have Jews in it, and now, since the

establishment of the State of Israel, it cannot allow Jews the sense of equality that all people who live independently in their own land must have. It sometimes seems as if the entire planet has been given *carte blanche* by Europeans to express its opinions about Israel. The subtext to those who live in the Diaspora is, “We will only like you and let you into our social circles, you bad Jews, if you condemn Israel.” This, though, is reminiscent of the hollow promises of the Spanish Inquisition: you will only be equal if you accept our religion and condemn your people. It is an empty promise, of course, but foolish people still fall for that promise, which is very close the Euro-American history of broken treaties with Native Americans. After the Spanish Inquisition and over three hundred broken treaties one would expect us all to wake up and reject the tainted promises of European racists.

The condescending treatment of Jews, forged in Europe, was passed from European Socialists and the All-Embracing emancipated promises of Soviet Socialism to academics and journalists all over the world. In place of Christianity there is a false, comic-book version of humanism that is broadcast via the mass media that seeks to convert its readers and viewers into the Cult of Righteous Indignation.

A good academic might rather question why others are trying to press a particular agenda and then consult histories. My impression is that today’s journalists have no concept of world history, nor do left-leaning University professors. Instead of reading canonical works they, like Soviet socialists, have created new versions of history, and cite from the babbling brook of postmodern-speak in, like the works of professors who oddly have no formal training in history. Citing them, the academic left adorn themselves with the socialist Rosary in the face of the vampire Zionist: “How can you say we are anti-Semitic when the people we are quoting are Jews?” Similarly, the Crow were used by Europeans who knew they would gladly help defeat their enemy, the Sioux. These tacticians understand that Jews also have their philosophical divisions and employ the likes of Noam Chomsky and Judith Butler to cite as righteous Jews. And their new faith of Righteous Indignation allows them a platform to unleash ethnic hatred, as long as it masquerades as criticism of Israel. I have noticed that the word “Zionist” is used by cult members as a curse and an insult.

In North America, anti-Israel demonstrations are all the more absurd. To hear people scream things such as, “Get off *their* land!” makes me wonder how these people could not be aware of whose land “they” are on. Has post-modern education erased pre-contact American history? A prime example of this sort of blind hypocrisy can be found in the drama of Rachel Corrie, the American anti-Israel activist who fell under an IDF bulldozer on March 16, 2003. Rachel Corrie lived in Olympia, Washington and attended Evergreen College. Her professors had obviously encouraged her misconceptions and half-cooked visions of Righteous Indignation and social justice, revolving around a notion of occupation and stolen land. Some of them have publicly claimed she was murdered by Israel. In other words the Jesus narrative is their way of understanding the zoned-out girl whose friends had time to snap photographs of her falling under a heap of earth as a bulldozer ploughed over her, but didn’t have time to pull her to safety. Without the crucifixion there is no passion play, no climax to the narrative, and no means of blaming Jews for the murder of a Holy Martyr. The best analogy I have read compares Corrie with Mary McGregor, the dim-witted school girl in Muriel Sparks’ novel *The Prime of Miss Jean Brody*, who is brainwashed by her teacher and dies volunteering in the Spanish Civil War, for the wrong side.

I see Rachel Corrie, her professors and allies as hypocrites of the greatest magnitude, as Olympia, Washington was ceded by treaties backed by false promises and lies. In short, the Coastal Salish were defrauded of their land in the 1850s. On that land sits the Corrie family and Evergreen State College where Rachel Corrie was a student. As far as I am aware, no one has yet made this point. While screaming about how Israel mistreats Gazans, Corrie's mere presence on requisitioned (stolen) Coastal Salish land invalidates any claims to martyrdom that her family, political cohort or Arab Nationalists may proclaim.

I often suspect that such people understand fully that they are guilty of land theft, or at the very least know they are benefiting from bartering in stolen property. To attenuate their guilt they divert their attention and the attention of others to a mythological version of Gaza. It is much easier to live in a comic book fantasy than to reconcile oneself to the most difficult questions of justice in the present. For me, the Rachel Corrie story represents the convergence of the Native American and Jewish narratives in our times. It is the point at which European myth-making has reached its climax and implodes under the weight of its own stupidity. It is a story of media generated heroes, villains, and victims, which to any thinking person should recognize as hollow and transparently stale as a Hallmark card.

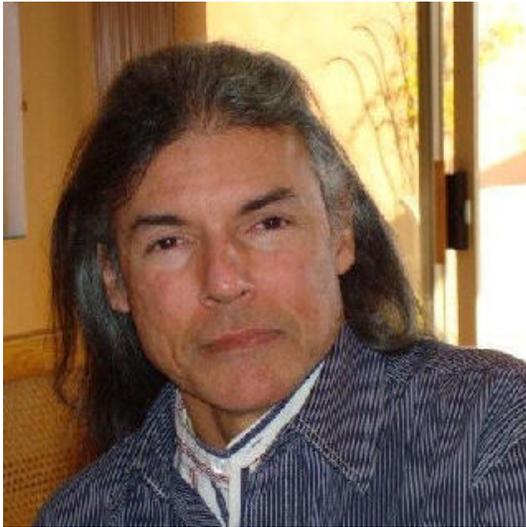
Much of academia is perverted by left-leaning social activism whose proponents have been busy rewriting history or reinterpreting it according to a Soviet-style party line. It calls to mind the anger I felt when reading Tzvetan Todorov's *Conquest of America*, which alludes to European cultural superiority during the fall of Tenochtitlán by conveniently ignoring the fact that Tenochtitlán (now Mexico City) was not conquered, as is claimed, but was abandoned by its population who fled a horrific plague, probably smallpox, that ran rampant and killed people in droves. It was likely carried by one of Cortes' co-conspirators. It was an accident of nature and not a victory of superior technology or martial tactics that allowed history to unfold as it has, and to claim otherwise is simply a lie.

The Leftist Academic narrative which serves as the intellectual force behind BDS is trapped in an infantile phase of development. Leftist academics pretend to reject Christianity while stuck in its mythological mind set, and its need for Jewish villains only reassures us that they are Christians without God, who maintain their form while rejecting the spiritual content and replacing it with a false humanism (though maintaining an overtly Calvinist brand of sanctimonious grandstanding). Replace "Jesus" with "Palestine" and voila, the new religion! I would suggest that the real centre of academic leftism is its propensity for dispensing pity to the victims it creates, for without those victims there can be no object for their pity and no feeling of superiority issues as a by-product of acts of Righteous Indignation, like the bad aftertaste of an artificial sweetener.

I would contend that Native Americans and Jews have been victimized in the same terms by Europeans who are unable to extract themselves from the perversion of their desire to be good human beings. This desire has been manipulated by the media, by the socialist inheritors of Soviet anti-Israel propaganda and by Arab nationalists, who along with the Soviets invented a false analogy to Native Americans, based on a desire to dominate Jews rather than coexist. In these terms our peoples are inextricably bound until we are able to abate the mythologies that fuel the false Righteous Indignation that impedes us all from progress in the modern world.

*Born in Wrangell, Alaska, Jay Corwin has a doctorate in Spanish and Latin American literature from the Florida State University and is author of many pieces of criticism of Latin-American fiction. He is currently head of the Spanish programme at the University of Cape Town.*

## [Contents](#)



**There is no Palestine,**

**There are no Palestinians**

**By Dr. David A. Yeagley**

In 1974, Dennis Banks, a leader of the new American Indian Movement (AIM) travelled to Vienna to meet with the World Council of Churches. While there, he also met with the Palestinian Liberation Organization, identified as a terrorist group, but having nothing to do with American Indians. Why would there be any meeting between AIM and the PLO?

The American Indian Movement, with a violent and anti-American image, had already established ties and associations with Angela Davis and the Communist Party, the Socialist Workers Party (Minneapolis), the American Labor Party, Cesar Chavez, the Puerto Rican Solidarity Committee, Fidel Castro, Hollywood entertainers, and a host of other new Communist organizations popping up

all over the United States. The PLO was considered another anti-American Communist effort, and AIM was trying to identify with the general Communist racial agitation movement that was sweeping the “oppressed” peoples of the Third World. Most of these groups welcomed AIM, for no people like the American Indians could shout its protest as loud against America. AIM quickly became a favorite of the anti-American movements. (See: [Alan Stang, “Red Indians,” in \*American Opinion\*, September, 1975.](#))

When I entered the field of American Indian politics in 2001, and learned the history of AIM, I was appalled. That the American Indian should be used as the mascot of the political low-life of the world was to me intolerable. I had nothing but positive intuitions about the Indian role in American society. Indians are an integral part of the land, like the rivers and mountains – more than the Europeans will ever be. The American national image can never be complete or sound without the American Indian being a fundamental part of it. This idea must be put forth positively and not in a confrontational way. Some Americans have a profound respect for Indians. The “Communist” (Socialist, Leftist, Liberal, and Progressive) use of aboriginals, though, seems to have obscured these natural psychological affinities. In demonstrating the Indian’s natural affection for the land, the Indian can be seen as the bedrock of patriotism to the land.

I denounced the protracted and paid belly-aching on the part of AIM, and condemned its influence as detrimental to Indian youth. Such a negative outlook as was being professionally pushed by Communist-funded (-- now we call “liberal” or “Democrat”) anti-American, anti-constitutionalists was impossible and dangerous. To my mind, nothing poisoned youth more than this nasty disposition of “I’ve been wronged,” and “You owe me.” It crushed every natural aspiration of youth. It stifled the intuitive ambitions of young people, particularly young men.

Then, as early as 2002, I began hearing of attempts to actually equate the “plight” of the so-called “Palestinians” with that of the American Indian. I found this bizarre. I could not perceive the association. Implied by this, of course, was that Israel was somehow the equivalent of the European invaders of the American continent. So it seemed the Indians were cast against the Jews. This was preposterous, in my opinion.

However, what really struck me was the absolute ignorance of who the so-called “Palestinians” really were, which allowed for the berserk claims that there was a natural connection between American Indians and “Palestinians.” By this time, of course, most people knew nothing of the origins of the American Indian Movement, and its anti-American roots, nor of the earliest attempts of associating it with “Palestinians.” My work was cut out for me. I had to expose, at least to my audience that consists of conservatives and patriots of all ethnicities and nationalities, the world over who the “Palestinians” were, and why they should not be associated with American Indians.

The people who are today referred to as “Palestinians” are Jordanian, Syrian, and more recently, a mix of other Arab nationals, and some military mercenaries from various Middle Eastern countries

like Iran and groups like Al-Qaeda. “Palestinian” does not refer to a race, language, a culture, a land, or a nation. It is a political fantasy. There is no Palestine, and there are no Palestinians.

The word “Palestine” comes from an ancient Hebrew word, פלשת (pelesheth), which has a root meaning “rolling,” and means migratory. In Biblical literature, it is first used in Exodus 15:14, identifying the land and inhabitants who would greatly fear the approach of the children of Israel as Israel came up from Egypt. It was a general term for a general area and people. However, in other ancient, non-Hebrew records, the land (or people) is not referred to as such, but separate tribal inhabitants are named, or the names of their ‘kings,’ such as *Kummuhu*, *Urik*, *Sibitti-be’l*, *Enil*, *Panammu*, etc. Tiglath-Pileser III (744-727) left such an inscription. (See, *The Ancient Near East*, ed. James B. Pritchard, 1973, p.193.) Apparently, the eastern coast of the Mediterranean was an evolving identity, being highly coveted real estate, yet, until inhabited by Israel, never saw an established nation over any significant period of time.

In the Torah, the same land is also called Cana’an. Cana’an was, however, just another tribe inhabiting the area. There were Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Cana’anites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites (Deuteronomy 7:1). The list varies slightly elsewhere in the Torah (e.g., Exodus 33:2), but Cana’an is a consistent reference. The land of Cana’an was the land of promise. It was promised to Abraham (Genesis 17:8).

“Palestine” has also been occasionally associated with the word *Pi-liš-te*, or Philistine. The ancient Hebrew word is פלשתִי (pelishtee), which is very similar to *pelesheth* (Palestine). This people, believed to be Egyptian in origin, did inhabit and dominate the coasts, certainly around the eleventh and tenth centuries BCE. Obviously, they were not part of the original migrants at the time of the Exodus.

None of these ancient peoples who inhabited Palestine prior to the Jews, were Arab, nor were they part of any other nation. They were very loosely confederate “fertility cults” with no political focus. When the children of Israel came upon the land, these tribes for the first time experienced a circumstantial unity, which comprised fear of a common enemy.

At the time of the destruction of the 2nd Temple (70 CE), there was, contrary to popular Christian belief, no major or significant dispersion of Jewish people. A small number of Christian Jews left the country for Peraea (a Transjordan province). The Jews in general did not leave the country. A new Jewish educational system was immediately established by the famous Rabbi Johanan ben Zakkai. As a people, Israel retained its identity. The Roman armies of Titus destroyed only Jerusalem and the national government. The people and the culture remained. (See, Michael Grant, *The Jews in the Roman World* (1973), p. 206, f.)

Without a national government, without a Temple, the coming centuries saw a certain lack of national Jewish focus in the land of Cana'an (Palestine). By the time of WWII (1945), the migration of European and Russian Jews to Palestine struck the uninformed world as a radical move. Arab peoples had inhabited Palestine for some time, people from Jordan, southern Syria, and even some Egyptians. It was all a leftover Muslim effect from the medieval era (7th century AD). The Arab Muslims made a profound claim not only on Palestine, but on the very site of the 2nd Temple. This, of course, is the historically established Muslim procedure—to take over, to claim someone else's land, to coerce the inhabitants, and to deny other national identities. There is no intent to respect, not to honor, but only to destroy that which is not Islamic.

The modern history of Palestine, as a British land management project (which included the etching out artificial borders of Arab countries all over the Middle East) is found in a fabulous volume by Joan Peters, called *From Time Immemorial* (1984). As in no other work, Peters documents all. The Arab Muslim “refugees” in Palestine, “victims” of the Jewish invasion, were mostly Jordanian and Syrian, and were not allowed back into their own countries, but rather were used as tools, as pricks, in the side of the new Israel. Indeed, some of these “immemorial” refugees were declared refugees (by the United Nations Relief and Work Agency) if they had lived in Palestine a minimum of two years before the 1948 conflict.

Rosemary Syigh wrote in 1977 that “a strongly defined Palestinian identity did not emerge until 1968, two decades after expulsion.” Peters comments, “It had taken twenty years to establish the “myth” prescribed by Musa Alami” See, Rosemary Syigh, “Sources of Palestinian Nationalism: A Study of a Palestinian Camp in Lebanon,” *Journal of Palestinian Studies*, vol. 6, no.3, 1977. Musa Alami (1897-1984) was an Arab leader born in Jerusalem. Peters quotes him as saying in 1948, “The people are in great need of a “myth” to fill their consciousness and imagination” (Peters, p.11). Alami wrote in 1949, “How can people struggle for their nation, when most of them do not know the meaning of the word? ... The people are in great need of a ‘myth’ to fill their consciousness and imagination...” Musa Alami, “The Lesson of Palestine,” *The Middle East Journal*, October, 1949.

Palestine is not a country. “Palestinian” does not denote a language, a religion, a culture, or an ethnicity. It is a myth, indeed. It is a political vision and the most ill-founded, perverted money laundry in modern times. That even someone as noble and broad-minded as Benjamin Netanyahu must speak of “Palestinians” as if they are a legitimate people demonstrates how effective anti-Zionism and anti-Semitism still is in the world.

As an American Indian, a Comanche from Oklahoma, it may strike some as wholly inappropriate that I should venture to comment on affairs so apparently remote from my own. There is a reason for my indulgence: In 2002, there were journalistic political attempts to associate Palestinians with American Indians, such as “Swallowing all before them,” in *The Economist* (October 31, 2002), and “Palestinians and Native Americans” in *Counterpunch* (January 14, 2003), and even crazy home-made web pages like “Colonization and Resistance in North America and Palestine” (2002). These efforts to cast Israel in the mold of a colonial force against the “Palestinians” were loud, and I was piquantly offended. I wrote articles of response, as I mentioned earlier, beginning with a

*FrontPageMagazine* piece on April 9, 2002, called “American Indians Aren’t Like Palestinians.” I’ve written numerous articles since, and published them on BadEaglel.com, my own web site.

I was particularly offended in January, 2007, when a group of so-called “Palestinians” actually dressed in pathetic, dime-store American Indian costumes to express their protest to the aggressions of the great Israel. (They were protesting road blocks!) The analogy is amiss. American Indians are not of some foreign race moved into a foreign country not theirs. We invaded no country. We later did fight a mighty invader, indeed. But we were never asked to go back to our native countries and leave America in peace. Moreover, we did not have billions of other American Indians in surrounding countries ready to come to our aid (or even to use us) and to ‘wipe America off the map.’ The analogy of “Palestinians” and American Indians is therefore preposterous, stupid, and reflects the superficial emotionalism of liberals. Liberals profess great sympathy for the poor Indians, and decry the horrible abuse of white America wreaked upon the Indians. Liberals use Indians as a symbol, a token of anti-Americanism, anti-patriotism, and anti-white racism, really. That Indians should be also used to support other political groups in the world who claim abuse, as if Indians are the universal mascot of the oppressed, is something I simply cannot tolerate. This places American Indians in the most pathetic, weak, and abject position possible, precluding us from any positive self-image, any development, and any real dignity in the world.

I don’t appreciate abuse of American Indians—especially when Indian images are being used to support specific political positions which I reject or despise. My whole purpose in public speaking and writing on political issues in America and in the world is to proffer American Indian history as an example of racial and national honor, not chauvinism, and least of all as a tool to support the antithesis of such. I believe in the preservation of race, nationhood, and honor. In the so-called “Palestinians,” I see no race, no nationhood, and no honor.

\*\*\*

*Dr. David Yeagley (1951-2014) was a twenty first century renaissance man. Armed with a doctorate in Music and a Master’s degree in Divinity, he attacked issues head on, paying little heed to those offended by his onslaughts. An author, political commentator, classical composer and biblical scholar, he was the conservative voice among American Indian intellectuals. An enrolled Comanche Indian and an avowed patriot, he railed against those he felt to be a threat to American liberty.*

*He had a special interest in Persian culture: He published articles on this subject and toured Iran. He was a Judeophile, often expressing his admiration for the Jewish people, the modern state of Israel, and the ancient land of the Bible.*

*He was a Bible scholar, posting on YouTube a series of five minute “Torah Shiurim,” (commentaries). When I mentioned to him a concern about a series of verses in the book of Samuel, he quickly brought together other verses which resolved the question.*

*He was intolerant of people who claimed special privilege based on past or contemporary racial oppression. This earned him the enmity of liberal Indians and their supporters, who denied Yeagley’s authenticity as well as his facts. His harsh criticism of many black leaders and especially of their enmity towards American values brought charges of racism. Perhaps there was some truth to this. However, Yeagley also expressed profound admiration for black people who upheld American values, such as Allan West, Herman Cain, and Condoleeza Rice. He said of the latter “Sheer elegance is her draw, and class, to say nothing of intelligence, character, and consistency.”*

*He was also intolerant of people who tried to exploit Native American identity and culture. He ridiculed those who claimed the words “Redskin” or “Indian” to be demeaning, and carried both labels proudly. He denounced other ethnic groups who tried to latch on to past exploitation of Indians in order to advance the cause of their own victimization.*

*Dr. Yeagley had cancer in his youth. The radiation treatments resulted in Mesothelioma when he got older. I called him several times to inquire about his well-being, and he could barely catch his breath to say a few words. He was grateful when I told him my synagogue was including him in its prayers for the ill.*

*Alas, those prayers were insufficient, and he passed away on March 11, 2014. His essay on Palestinian attempts to exploit Indian identity reflects the depths of his scholarship, and the intensity of his passion. While he said much to offend, he said more to inform.*

*We don’t endorse everything that Dr. Yeagley has said during his life. Then again we don’t endorse everything the other contributors to this publication have said, either. We choose to let their essays included herein, including Dr. Yeagley’s, speak for themselves.*

[Contents](#)



## **David Ahenakew and His Antisemitism**

**By Ira Robinson**

David Ahenakew (1933 –2010) was a Canadian First Nations leader who left a significant legacy of achievement in advancing educational opportunity among First Nations people in Saskatchewan.

His career included a term as Chief of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, and another as National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations [AFN]. His achievement was crowned by the award of the Order of Canada. However his public career was fatally compromised by his expression of antisemitic feelings. Accusations against him of promoting hatred against Jews led to two trials that achieved much notoriety and to the revocation of his membership in the Order of Canada by the Governor General. The Ahenakew affair has much to say to us concerning antisemitism in contemporary Canada.

According to one version of the story related by Ahenakew, he first learned about “the Jews” as a teenager in Saskatchewan from both returning First Nations veterans of the Second World War and from local residents in Saskatchewan. In Ahenakew’s other version, the roots of his attitudes toward the Jews stem from his experience in the Canadian Forces from 1951-1967, during which period, he was stationed in Germany in 1957, and discussed the issue of the Jews with Germans he met. Either way, Ahenakew was exposed to a fairly standard antisemitic narrative that he accepted as true. According to this narrative, as he would relate it:

The Second World War was started by the Jews ... The Jews damn near owned all of Germany prior to the war. That's why Hitler came in. He was going to make damn sure that the Jews didn't take over Germany, or even Europe. That's why he fried six million of those guys, you know. Jews would have owned the goddamned world.

During his career with the Canadian Forces, he was also stationed with the United Nations peacekeeper force in the Gaza Strip, where it is not unlikely that he picked up a Palestinian anti-Israeli narrative (also held by many contemporary anti-Semites) that he also adopted as his own. As he stated:

And look what they're [Jews] doing now; they're killing people in Arab countries. I was there, I was there.

Further into the interview which constituted the main evidence against him at his trial, he reiterated:

Well, because I saw the Jews kill people in, in the Egypt when I was over there. And the Palestinians, the Egyptians, the Arabs generally, eh. I saw them fucking dominate everything.

Finally, he gave expression to a fairly standard contemporary antisemitic narrative that Jews controlled things, especially the media, in North America, as well:

...who in the hell owns many of the banks in the States, many of the corporations, many, well look it her [sic] in Canada, ASPER... ASPER, he controls the media... Well, what the hell does that tell you? You know that's power.

All these remarks, which triggered Ahenakew's first trial, were made in a question and answer session after a lecture he gave at a meeting of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations on December 13, 2002. They were reported by the *Saskatoon Star Phoenix* and were quickly picked up by the Canadian national media. Because of these remarks Ahenakew was charged with promoting hatred in June, 2003.

In a magazine article published soon afterward, he was quoted as once again accusing the media, which he likely held responsible for his troubles, of being controlled by Jews:

“When a group of people, a race of people, control the world media, something has to be done about it,” he wrote.

When he was put on trial in July, 2005, Ahenakew attempted to excuse his remarks, blaming them on his diabetic condition, a bad reaction to a change in medication, and his having drunk some wine

previously. He was convicted of promoting hatred against Jews and fined \$1,000.00. Even though the amount of the fine was set fairly low, in order not to make him into a “martyr”, the aftermath of his conviction, on July 8, 2005, Ahenakew accused the Canadian legal system of systemic bias against First Nations. As he stated:

My case was as much about racism against First Nations as it was about alleged racism against Jewish people...First Nations have never received a fair trial in Canada's judicial system.

On July 11, 2005, he was stripped of his Order of Canada. Ahenakew was quoted as attributing the revocation of his Order of Canada to “the pressure put on the advisory committee by some of the Jewish community, including a letter writing campaign and the lobbying by the Canadian Jewish Congress...the decision by the Advisory Council is a clear indication of where the power in this country lies”.

Approximately one year later, in June, 2006, the Saskatchewan Court of Queen's Bench overturned his conviction and ordered a new trial on the grounds that while "Mr. Ahenakew's comments, on any standard, were shocking, brutal and hurtful," the judge had failed to properly take into account the context of Ahenakew's anti-Semitic statements that came out in an angry confrontation with a reporter, and, therefore, may not have constituted “willful” hatred.

A new trial was held in 2008, as a result of which Ahenakew was acquitted of the charges against him. In the court's decision, issued in February 2009, Judge Wilfred Tucker characterized Ahenakew's anti-Semitic remarks as "revolting, disgusting and untrue", but basically accepted the defense's contention that the confrontational context of the remarks did not constitute an “intent “to incite hatred. The Crown did not choose to appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada, which disappointed many within the Jewish community who supported such an appeal because the Ahenakew case was considered by many Jewish observers to be similar to the well-publicized hate speech cases of James Keegstra and Ernst Zundel. As B'nai Brith Canada Executive Vice President Frank Dimant stated at the time: “We urge the government to step in and take the opportunity to review hate legislation in light of ongoing manifestations of hate in this country.”

One thing the Ahenakew affair certainly brought into focus was the presence of antisemitic attitudes among First Nations in Canada. Although, in response to the charges against David Ahenakew, a number of prominent First Nations leaders, like Matthew Coon Come and Phil Fontaine, thoroughly condemned his antisemitism, there were other first Nations voices that supported Ahenakew. For example, the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, whose Chief Ahenakew had been, proposed Ahenakew's reinstatement as a Senator in that organization, which Ahenakew declined when considerable negative political pressure was exerted against the reinstatement . Manitoba aboriginal leader Terry Nelson, who has himself accused the Canadian government of attempting to commit genocide against First Nations, and who has publicly associated himself with Iran's attempt

to impugn Canada's record on human rights, asserted that Ahenakew was a victim of a Jewish-controlled media and stated that if First Nations people resorted to violence it was the Jewish media that would be to blame.

What did the Ahenakew Affair mean to the relations between First Nations and the Jewish community in Canada? First of all, it meant that Jewish leaders were paying more attention to the Canadian First Nations community and listening to their concerns with greater sensitivity. One small token of this was that, prior to criminal charges being filed against Ahenakew, Dimant spoke of the possibility of dealing with Ahenakew not through the ordinary Canadian justice system, but rather through procedures of "Indian restorative justice", involving sentencing and healing circles.

Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC) had established relations with representative First Nation organizations like the Assembly of First Nations at least since the 1980s. This was entirely consistent with its philosophy that discrimination against one group is discrimination against all and that the CJC had an obligation to intervene in larger societal issues, especially those respecting human rights. Nonetheless, in response to the Ahenakew affair, the Canadian Jewish communal leadership seems to have devoted special attention to the First Nations community. CJC President Ed Morgan and CEO Bernie Farber thus met with AFN chief Phil Fontaine in Ottawa on May 16, 2005. Both Morgan and Farber participated in the annual General Assembly of the AFN which met in Yellowknife on July 7, 2005. As Farber stated, "the Ahenakew case has solidified our relations with First Nations." He was further quoted as saying that CJC was cooperating with First Nations on issues like land claims and residential schools. Furthermore, CJC sponsored several trips to Israel by aboriginal leaders.

Morgan's speech to the AFN's General Assembly, held on the very eve of the Ahenakew verdict, dealt in general with things the Canadian Jewish and First Nations communities held in common and how they could better understand each other. In his prepared remarks, Morgan spoke at length concerning the Ahenakew affair and its implications for Jewish-First Nations relationships:

I cannot help but be moved by how decisively and articulately the messages came to us from aboriginal peoples across Canada in the wake of his [Ahenakew's] ugly rant. We were inundated with calls, e-mails, faxes all conveying the same message of condemnation on the one hand and of solidarity with us on the other. They knew that the pain he had caused, though aimed at one group, had hit a much broader target including their own community and Canadian society at large. They understood the irony of a representative of one minority community that has experienced discrimination targeting another such community for a hateful diatribe. They knew that, in the words of one chief, "silence was not an option", so they spoke... The Ahenakew affair began with hate but thanks to the aboriginal peoples of this country it ended with... support, mutual respect, and enhanced friendship.

Morgan concluded this section of his remarks by pledging:

...that the Canadian Jewish Congress will be more active on aboriginal issues and we will seek new and creative ways to work together to achieve our common goals. We have much to teach, and much to learn from each other.

Anita Bromberg, Bnai Brith Canada National Director of Legal Affairs, echoed Morgan's Jewish commitment to First Nations when she stated, "But as we have said, there is a silver lining, namely, that we have worked closely with the aboriginal community to build a Canada based on tolerance and understanding and will continue to do so." Alan Yusim, another Bnai Brith Canada official, emphasized the excellent relationships the organization has built up with Aboriginal groups across the country. "These relationships are stronger than ever as we move forward with many joint initiatives," Yusim said.

Compared to the hate speech affairs of Keegstra and Zundel, whose overt antisemitic activities and trials were conducted over a period of decades, the Ahenakew affair seems relatively simple and straightforward. Though the evidence shows that Ahenakew held anti-Semitic views, as well as disparaging views of other groups, such as Asians, Blacks, Eastern Indians, and others that he had expressed privately for years, there was only one major public incident lasting a bit more than two minutes. Why, then, all the fuss?

It seems most likely that the rapt attention Jews in Canada paid to this case is directly related to its having come after the long drawn out frustrations of the Keegstra and Zundel trials, and reflects the Jewish community's concern that the Ahenakew case was yet another in a series of legal precedents that had been set that, in the words of Bnai Brith Canada's Steven Slimovitch, "constitute a dangerous precedent in which the standard of conviction could be set inappropriately high." And indeed, in the years since Ahenakew was ultimately found not guilty, it has been noted that Provincial Attorneys General have been reluctant to approve hate crime prosecutions.

It is also likely that the Jewish community became as deeply aroused as it was due to Ahenakew's absorption of the anti-Israel narrative in his antisemitic remarks. These remarks reflect a contemporary global trend in which anti-Israel and antisemitic narratives have been merged. It is for this reason, among others, that one of the primary public actions by the organized Jewish community of Canada has been to sponsor trips to Israel for First Nations leaders.

In a Canada that has become highly sensitive to expressions of prejudice against defined groups of people, the Ahenakew case has taken its place as an example of the real penalties to be paid by a person in the public eye who transgresses the boundaries of hate speech, even if the Canadian judicial system could not formally convict him of a criminal offense.

*Ira Robinson is Professor of Judaic Studies and Interim Director of the Institute for Canadian Jewish Studies, Concordia University in Montreal, Quebec. He is also an executive board member of the Canadian Institute of Jewish Research (CIJR).*

## [Contents](#)

### **Perspectives:**

#### **The Indigenous Rights of the Jewish People**

**By Alan Baker**

#### **The Jewish People**

1. There is no doubt whatsoever as to the historic presence and existence of the Jewish people in the Middle-East generally, and the area of historic/Biblical Palestine, or "the Holy Land" in particular.
1. This presence, which has continued from time immemorial up to present day, is well-documented and proven not only in the scriptures of all three monotheistic religions, and visible in extensive archeological remains, but is also borne-out by empirical historic writings and records by early Greek, Roman, pagan and other visitors to the area, dating from the third century BCE and through the third century CE, and by Moslem historians around the eighth century CE, attesting to a continuous Jewish presence.
1. The fact that the sources of Christianity evolved and emanated from Judaism is, in and of itself, further proof of the presence of a thriving Jewish community in the area generally, and in the specific areas in which the Jews existed from Bible times, including Judea (from which the term Jew stems), Samaria and the other neighboring tribal areas.
1. Of all extant Peoples, the Jewish People has the strongest claim to be indigenous/aboriginal to the Holy Land, where Judaism, the Hebrew language, and the Jewish People were born

around 5,000 years ago. Before then, the Holy Land was home, *inter alia*, to the immediate ancestors of the Jewish People, including the Phoenicians, Ammonites, Moabites, Edomites, and Philistines. Those other peoples have long since vanished from the world.

1. More recent historic documentation regarding the re-establishment of the Jewish Home in the area, including the 1917 Balfour Declaration and statements by Winston Churchill and others during the 1920's, all recall the historic connection of the Jewish People with Palestine.
1. Judaism, the Hebrew language and the Jewish People were already established in the Holy Land before the 6th-7th century CE emergence of Islam and Classical Arabic and the initial Muslim conquest of the Holy Land in the first half of the 7th century CE.
1. While there is no doubt as to the historic nature of the Moslem presence in and rights to the area since the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE, and the more recent continuous residence of Arabs in the areas of Judea and Samaria, which in itself, may certainly invoke limited indigenous rights, these cannot be seen to have displaced the earlier indigenous rights, and continuous presence of the Jewish People in the area.

### **Indigenous Peoples**

1. While clearly as the name implies the existence of indigenous peoples has forever been a factor in national and international society, it has only been in the past few years that international attention has been given to the fact that these peoples have rights, whether to their traditional historic and tribal lands, resources, culture and language, that must be recognized and protected by and within the international community.
1. These rights have recently been crystallized into the "*United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People*" appended to a United Nations General Assembly Resolution No. 61/295 adopted in 2006. This declaration, generally accepted within the international community, acknowledges the rights of indigenous peoples to their historic lands, territories and resources, and guarantees their continued rights to maintain and protect these lands, with entitlements to compensation, restitution or redress for lands confiscated or taken.

### **Today's Political Situation regarding Judea and Samaria**

1. The clear and internationally acknowledged historic, indigenous presence of the Jewish People in the Land of Israel including the areas of Judea and Samaria and Jerusalem (historic Palestine) in particular, when placed in the context of today's political situation in the Middle East, and the relationship between Israel and the Palestinians, leads to the following conclusions:

- The indigenous rights of the Jewish people in the areas of Judea and Samaria and Jerusalem (as in Israel itself) are well-founded both historically and legally, and cannot be denied by the international community, whether by individual states or international organizations such as UNESCO.
- 
- These areas cannot, by any account, be termed "occupied territories", which term implies a total lack of historic or legal connection to the area by the Jewish People. This term is also incorrect from the point of view of international law.
- 
- This term together with the term "occupied Palestinian territory", used in UN and international parlance, has no basis whatsoever in law or in fact, and is nothing more than a non-binding political determination by a political majority of states.
- Settlement by Israelis in the areas of Judea and Samaria and Jerusalem (commonly termed, in international parlance "the West Bank"), is not, and cannot be termed as illegitimate, and in any event cannot be described as an "obstacle to peace in the region". The establishment of towns and villages in land that is not privately owned by Palestinian residents does not violate any agreement or binding international document.
- Jews have every right to re-establish their residential rights and presence in the area as long as this is done in due deference to existing legally-acquired property rights.
- Any political negotiation aimed at reaching an agreed resolution of the dispute between Israel and the Palestinians cannot disregard the inherent indigenous rights of the Jewish People in the area, in the same way that it cannot disregard residency and land rights of the Palestinians in the area. Due deference has to be given by each party to the valid and legitimate historic and legal claims and rights of the other, and this has, in the same manner, to be acknowledged by the international community.
- 
- The United Nations, its member states and major organs, its Secretary General and all its Specialized Agencies and associated bodies throughout the UN System, all have a duty to acknowledge and to honor the rights of the Jewish indigenous people in their ancestral home pursuant to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. Any action within the various UN organizations on behalf of Palestinian rights at the United Nations must take into consideration the rights of all indigenous people in the region, and cannot ignore the indigenous rights of the Jewish People.
- 
- *Alan Baker is a former a former ambassador to the State of Israel to Canada and an expert on international law. He also directs the Institute for Contemporary Affairs at the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs. Baker was one of three members appointed by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to examine the legal aspects of land ownership pertaining to the West Bank. Chaired by former Justice Edmund Levy, the report, which was published in July 2012, came to be known as the Levy Report.*

## [Contents](#)



**What it means to be an Oglala Sioux Jewish woman:**

**A Personal Account**

**By Mara Cohen**

In these days of change, (Aren't they all...and haven't they always been) I wanted to share some of my own experience of being born in a liminal place and of a liminal status. Always on the cusp of beginnings and endings, of being between Worlds, and Peoples, and what it means to me as a Jewish Woman of the Oyukpehe Tiyospe "White Horse Creek People", Hehaka Sapa Tiawe "Black Elk", from the Oglala "Scatters Their Own" Band of the Titonwan Lakota "Red Earth People"

In Lakota, the language of my mother's birth people, "Iyeska," has taken on a pejorative meaning - literally meaning "Speaks with white mouth." It was first used to identify the children born of unions between those who came from "over the water" and those who are indigenous to this land. These were the children who could speak both parents' language and who had exposure to both cultures. The Tiyospaye, the Lakota extended Family structure, was one where people intermarried with other Peoples, their Ceremonies allowed family members to "Hunka" "Makes Relatives" from outside, and to make them ours. As the whole World is perceived Lakota Way, to be a great interconnected web of Relatives, therefore one must Respect all. Subsequently, Lakota perspectives were never exclusionary, nor did Lakotas feel particularly threatened by other people's ways. Either others were tolerated, or they weren't, as relations with other Tribes and Tribal Histories demonstrated. We had no use for cannibals, human sacrifice or the imbalance of disrespect. By the Lakota way of time keeping, we moved from Dog Days, when dogs pulled our Travois, as we followed the herds of

buffalo across the Grasslands of the North Plains, to Horse Days, when the Sacred Elk Dog came home. We knew little hunger, and the great blossoming of our Culture happened, and then the heartache of the conquest and the loss of freedom that came with Reservation Days, and the ever abiding hurt of 1893, and the butchery at Wounded Knee.

This is when the “Iyeska” label had begun to pick up its negative connotations. Often the “Iyeska” used their knowledge of both languages and their relationships with the “other” parent’s people, who were now in control, to their personal advantage. And often they encountered the worst of the European prejudices and racism, which they took on as their own, and with which they identified. This is the very definition of being “colonized”. We see this happening wherever peoples have been subjected to conquest and dispossessed of their heritage and history. These peoples identify with the oppressor, as the Kapo’s did in the European concentration camps for my father’s People. From 1876 until 1978, when the United States allowed the Indian Religious Freedom Act to become law, there were the ongoing depredations of boarding/residential schools where children were taken in order to assimilate them. The “Kill the NDN, save the Child” policy of the US government damaged generations that have yet to heal. (NDN is shorthand spelling for Indian.) The forcible removal of Children from their Families, and their Peoples in order to gut the Cultures and the Identity of these generations, along with the Graveyards filled with Children’s remains are just a few of the hallmarks of genocide. The challenge then was bare survival. Humans tend to become very tactical living for the next meal, surviving the next big storm -when the goal is to survive this season, this year - and you can lose hope when there is just more of the same, no future and the sense of valuing who and what they are has been erased.

But there are those who survive, who take a long view, and find what is right for them, despite all they have been through, personally and generationally. My mother was one such indigenous survivor. She rarely spoke of what she had lived through. In fact, not until the evening before she passed did she tell me the worst of it - the rapes, the medical experimentation, the grinding poverty, but also how she had triumphed, finishing university and learned what she needed to know to survive in the world of a dominant culture and make it her own. But she came from a very spiritually focused family, and people whose own spirituality had been proscribed, though practiced secretly. And then, post WWII, she found a spirituality that resonated with her and a people she felt at home with, more than any of the other immigrants who had come to North America. She found Judaism. She told me once, “Since all these Peoples didn’t seem to like Jews, I wanted to find out why? And I found out that it was because they were a Good People, different than any other”.

She spent seven years learning the language, ways of life, traditions and ceremonies of the Jewish people. And then she understood what an old piece of writing on the thinnest of hide in the old parfleche bag was. A ketubah that was taken in a raid on the Thieve’s Road (Bozeman Trail), during the Red Cloud’s War. It had belonged to her Mother’s, Mother’s, Mother. A captive girl. Her cousin sent it to her, and the Rabbi overseeing her study had pictures made. And told her she was a returned person, like the “Lostbirds” the taken away, who finally came home. Mother continued her studies, for while she knew Jews were indigenous to the Levant, they were also the only group of immigrants who spoke of leaving North America through their prayers and as an understanding of who they are, she had to learn what had been lost to her. Knowing the Spirituality, the Lifeways of your people makes you know yourself, and your relationships with others. As a group who came from Tribes

themselves, Jews understood their place as a Family, a great World Family, connected to their past and their future, and remembering as a matter of everyday living. She resonated with this on a deeply spiritual level, as she told me, “One of the best things, is Jews are like Lakota in that they don’t have to have everybody be just like them. They are who they are and they know it”. She also liked the fact that Jews didn’t do the proselytizing “thing”, given her own experiences with that.

All this being said, and, as with all things, nothing comes from nothing, and we all come from something. Growing up during the US civil rights movement and with the hard-headed pragmatism of being Ranching Folks, along with the cultural dichotomy of the annual visits to my father’s family in Seattle, my first perspectives of “white” people were not only of the intolerance of Rapid City, South Dakota for NDN People, and the apartheid prejudices that were faced there, but also the noisy, verbal, all encompassing Mizrahi/Sephardi Jewish family I was a part of in Seattle. Always being too tall, for that side of my family is short, and their understanding of their piece of the United States versus how we lived in, isolated Reservation Ranch Country. For all the misunderstanding and lack of knowledge about the way of life there (They thought Mom and I lived in a Tipi), they were concerned that the tiny Jewish community in Rapid City couldn’t provide enough; enough contact, enough education, enough sense of what it meant to be Jewish in a largely gentile world, amongst gentile relatives. My great grandma told me story after story of my Jewish family’s history. She insisted I learn Hebrew, as well as the Arabic and Ladino spoken in her home. What she and most of my folks there did not realize, is that it was very, very much like my Lakota family home: The multilingual, ancient oral tradition, as well as story after story of our Lakota history with high value placed on remembering. Given all of this, I came out essentially a tri-cultural human being. This was a generation before most US citizens had an idea about what that might mean: The ability to see reality through a number of perspectives, but most importantly, with an ease of movement between different cultures, and rarely seeing the world as “One Way Only,” always knowing the exception, and the greatest challenge, being true to all my “selves”, and never disrespecting where I come from, or what I learned there. This might have been more difficult had I been born Navajo, or Zuni, traditionally polytheist, but the Lakota perceptions of the world, are what they are, and in very many ways are very similar to Jewish perceptions. Learning to honor both ways within the constraints of the other was hard. And not always knowing my “place” and growing up without the boundaries most have in knowing who they are.

This led to some difficulties of heart and mind; My Jewish faith upheld me through those times. The relationship with the One, the relationship with my Peoples, this gave me the anchor of my fluid existence as a career military member. The tradition of coming from a Warrior People on one side, and as Healers on the other, I found my niche as Flight Nurse, in an Operational Flying Unit. I found a home-away-from-home in any nearby Jewish community wherever I found myself, and in the sketchy, but valuable observances with other Jewish military members in the war zones I worked in. The affinity with other Jewish members of other nation’s Military....and of course there is Israel.

As an indigenous person from North America, known as Turtle Island from the traditional Ojibwe reference, I was not prepared for the physical and psychic resonance with the land (Israel) there, and had to accept that I was indigenous, though not native there as well. And I know exactly what that means. I uphold those inherent obligations in all ways except by making aliyah. And yes, I would give my life for that land and my people there, as I would for this land, and my people here.

Today, the European Left, along with their colleagues in North American academia, and media, the post liberal, globalist ideology, coupled with the hatred of Jews which is part and parcel of the European cultural matrix, (how could it not be after 1700 years of indoctrination) and which is now in concert with the oil producing nations and their clients - they are all spilling their cultural and religious agendas and false narratives into the ears of indigenous peoples here. They seek a commonality that is not real. And, to them, ideology is more important than people. As it was with the European communists and the European missionaries, and the European whatever that sought to suborn and homogenize identity, and are as intolerant of others' beliefs as any Spanish Conquistador ever was. And they have used the North American indigenous experience, and claimed it for their own. There is some reason they do this, perhaps to gain credibility for their untruths. But I look at the propaganda pictures, the false allegations, and the knowingly misleading memes that so many accept as "reality", when it has nothing to do with the reality on the ground either in Israel, or Judea/Samaria or Gaza. Someday, I will go to Hebron, and see where my family came from...I shall not try to take the house back from the Arab family that lives there now. Nor, as I have never lived there, do I regret not doing so up till now. But my Jewish great grandma would have. To claim that Jews are "colonizers and occupiers" when they have simply gone back to the land from which they came makes me angry. Jews always lived there, and now they are living there again, despite massacres and ethnic cleansing.

And I am glad. And I hope and pray that their experiences with their Arab neighbors will improve. That they not be what they were for my Mizrahi Family, that they be not "dhimmi" living under those apartheid laws. I pray that someday the Arab peoples will accept Jewish indigenous rights as being a real thing, and that not all peoples have to be Muslim, or ruled by Muslims, and certainly not by Arab Muslims. The Amazigh and Kurds are quite competent to rule themselves, and Arab colonialist culture is just that. In the lands they control, there are no safe minorities, if even allowed to remain there at all, and no respect for indigenous peoples or their spiritual traditions.

I have shared my "liminal" experience with you. I hope you do not mind. I see coming, the further destruction of more of the different lenses on reality that humanity encompasses, in favor of a homogeneous wad - and further loss of generationally-acquired wisdom of different peoples. The new "Liberals" who embrace the idea that all cultures are the equals of all other cultures are insane. Different perspectives, competing ideas, and taking pride in who and what you are, is not a negative thing. I believe it is the push to eradicate all the "differences" between humans that has proven most dangerous to humanity. And if there is any worse form of governance for Humans than theocracy to be found, I am unaware of it. The Militants of a Hamas or ISIL would see my Traditional Relatives butchered as Pagans...and the lack of respect for others' lives and ways of life will cause even more loss of the richness of Humanity with the same methods which were used to wipe out Indigenous Religions and Peoples in the Middle East and the Levant. None of what ISIL and Hamas do are new things...just more firepower and better propaganda excusing what they do...otherwise, it could still be 637 C.E. with people being buried alive and having their heads hacked off. And they intend to take their show on the road. That is something truly real for all Traditional Indigenous to consider.

*Mara Cohen was born in 1957 in Seattle, Washington. She is of mixed heritage: Middle Eastern Levantine Jewish from the Island of Rhodes and Sioux, specifically from the Oglala Lakota People. Cohen worked as a Medevac flight nurse and chief of operational training for a Tactical Operational Group for the United States Air Force and as a cultural linguist specialist served on the Minority Veteran's Advisory Committee for the US Congress and advocates for Indigenous People's Rights.*

## [Contents](#)



### **Uqittuk Mark: Inuit Defender of Israel**

**as told to Machla Abramovitz**

My name is Uqittuk Mark and I've lived my whole life in Ivujivik, an isolated, ice-swept village of 380 people located in the Nunavik region, 2,000 kilometers north of Montreal, Quebec. Ivujivik means "Place where ice accumulates because of strong currents." Situated on a sandy cove sandwiched between imposing cliffs overlooking Hudson Bay and the Hudson Strait, the currents between the two are so strong that trapped animals are often crushed by the flowing ice. In Ivujivik, ice is a constant: There are only three months of the year, from July till October, when there isn't any. There are no roads linking Ivujivik to any other Nunavik villages; the only way into the settlement is by plane.

I was born in an igloo, but shortly after my birth, my entire community moved into regular housing. Most young Inuits stay in town; they find jobs here. The majority hunt for a living, mainly seal, walrus and beluga. Then, there are those like me who leave temporarily to attend schools of higher

education. I studied at the Algonquin College in Ottawa. Today, I work as a weatherman and a control tower operator at the Ijuvik Airport. Our people have lived in Ijuvik for 4,000 years.

Inuits began converting to Anglicanism in the mid-70s. Along with this conversion came secular knowledge. Before then, we didn't attend school because there were no schools. But, even prior to that, young people began leaving the traditional ways en masse.

Since attending Sunday school as a young boy, I had always longed to visit the Holy Land. I told myself that should the opportunity to go there arise, I would grab it. The opportunity presented itself in 2006 when I joined the Canada Awakening Ministries tour. I was one of 40 participants that comprised of First Nations groups, their ministers as well as others from Ireland, Fiji and Ontario. I was the only male from the North. It was a two-week trip from start to finish, my first outside Canada and it didn't disappoint. For some, it was a life-altering experience: For me, it was a remarkable pilgrimage – a personal journey into the world of the Torah and the New Testament. The stories I learned in Sunday school came alive to me, for instance, the desert where John the Baptist was born and the Sea of Galilee. I felt at home in the Galilee.

We toured most of the land. The only places we didn't visit were the West Bank and Gaza as it was considered too dangerous to go there. Keeping away from those places, though, didn't immunize us from danger. One kibbutz we visited was hit by Hamas rockets soon after we left. Had we remained longer, we would have been casualties of those missiles, as were many of the Israelis we met there. Seeing and experiencing the land and the people, opened me up to a new perspective on the world and, interestingly, deepened my understanding of what needed to be done to help preserve my own culture.

I was most struck by the differences between Israeli and Canadian culture. In my naiveté, I just assumed that Israel would be yet another Western democracy. I wasn't prepared for just how traditionally Jewish it is. It isn't only the language, the fact that Israelis speak Hebrew and Yiddish and not English, but I found their customs and traditions unexpected and, at times, inexplicable. In one kibbutz we visited, pigs were elevated onto some kind of platform; we were told that the Jews weren't allowed to touch them. How Israelis observe the Sabbath also intrigued me. There, the Sabbath begins Friday night and ends Saturday night. Orthodox Jews keep the Sabbath according to God's commandment to Moses, as an example, they don't use the elevators on the Sabbath: They consider pushing a knob work and Jews aren't allowed to work on the Holy Day.

We also attended museums where we were introduced to Jewish history, especially what happened during World War II. We were told that before becoming a State, Jewish settlers weren't allowed to arm themselves but were innovative in bypassing these restrictions. For instance, to protect Jews, one man smuggled in guns piece by piece and assembled them in Jerusalem. It was a superhuman effort. I found that awesome.

Israel has a lot to teach us Inuits about preserving a culture. Look at what Eliezer Ben-Yehudah accomplished by reinvigorating the Hebrew language. Ben-Yehuda was a Polish lexicographer and journalist who moved to Palestine in 1881. This accomplishment especially resonated with me. Over the years, many of us became confused because of having lost our identity, especially when the Canadian government tried assimilating us into the Canadian culture. Besides losing our culture, we also lost our language. We were taught that our language is something we should be ashamed of. After hearing about what Ben-Yehudah did, I felt encouraged. Perhaps we, too, can reinvigorate our language, albeit with a lot of effort. There are attempts being made today. Recently, a few books written in Inuit were published and even a dictionary. I'm sure more books will follow. I hope all is not yet lost.

Israel, though, has so much more to teach us as a people, especially about how to survive. Jewish history parallels what we are going through today in terms of our own relationship with a dominant, domineering society. In that regard, we share a deep understanding of what Jews have endured over the centuries and what they continue to endure, even in their own country.

- 
- 
- *We have certain expectations of native people. They have to be militant. They should be political radicals, and quick to rebuke white people, the "colonizers." They should bang on drums, chanting in a tongue that no one else can understand, and refer to the mysteries of the Great Spirit.*

*Very often, native people know what's expected of them, and if in the mood, will play the role. My friend Uqittuk Mark won't. He refuses to be the aggrieved aboriginal. When I first visited his community in the early 1980's, he didn't lecture me about the evils of the white man. Rather, he pulled out his guitar and gave me a folk music concert, with songs by Pete Seeger, Bob Dylan, and more. We did discuss native issues, but not as personal accusations. Rather, we talked to improve our understanding. Uqittuk's critiques of government policy on education and development were passionate, but even-handed.*

*When I recently reconnected with Uqittuk, he again greeted me with the same warm demeanor as I experienced decades ago. He still takes the issues affecting his family and community quite seriously, and he still uses the approach of trying to achieve understanding.*

*A major change is that he is now a committed Christian. He is passionate about his beliefs, and in keeping with his character, is always trying to understand more. He told me about his recent Israel pilgrimage, which had a profound spiritual effect on him.*

*Uqittuk is from a kind of sandwich generation of Inuit. Their modern education limited their ability to learn traditional hunting. The influence of western popular culture affected them, whether in music, food, or livelihood. Uqittuk and I had many discussions about authenticity: was his generation authentically Inuit, was my generation authentically Jewish? They're not*

*“real” Inuit, he and his friends declared, because they had been educated in someone else’s culture. It took a few years, but I eventually realized his perspective was right, and mine wrong. And not just about Inuit.*

*Uqittuk is authentic: as an Inuk (Eskimo), Christian, and as a sensitive and intelligent friend. It’s an honor to have him offer to tell CIJR about his Israel pilgrimage.*

• -- Nathan Elberg

## [Contents](#)



## **Conversation with a Metis About Israel**

**Ryan Bellerose**

I have some interesting conversations sometimes. That comes from being Métis. Métis are known as the “bridge people,” which means that we are often seen as the go-betweens for white people and Indians. What it really means is that we don’t really fit in anywhere completely, unless it’s with our own people or oddly enough another group of people who have been marginalized and oppressed like the Jews.

Anyway, when talking about the commonalities between Jews and Indians, I often deal with some ingrained prejudices. You see, most natives are Christians who have been indoctrinated with prejudices towards Jews, and when you add the fact that most people who have been fighting for native rights also have a left-wing bias, you add in people who have been only ever told the false narrative of Palestinian indigenous status and surface commonalities.

I work hard to teach people that they have got to look deeper than the surface, because the surface is populated mostly by false narratives based on flawed understandings of history, and that the people who perpetuate those myths do NOT have our best interests at heart; in fact, their arguments are actually extremely damaging to our struggle.

This is an excerpt from an actual conversation between myself and an Indian friend. Do not be alarmed, it's natural for someone to have opinions like this based on flawed history. But most of my people are very intelligent and once set straight, they often understand very well why what they once believed was incorrect. This conversation was with someone who asked me why I am "always talking about the Middle East and Jews." They were upset that I had said something about Palestinians not wanting peace.

\*\*\*

**"But Ryan, the Jews are bad people because the bible says they killed Jesus. The priest told me that they are bad people,"** said an Indian friend of mine whose family was forced into residential schools.

*"Umm seriously? I am going to ask you a question and I need you to answer honestly. This same priest who told you Jews were bad people, isn't that the same priest who told you that speaking your own language is evil and that having dark skin is a mark of sin? Did you believe that? Are you evil for speaking Cree and being brown?"*

**"No of course not, why would I be evil for speaking Cree or being dark that's just who I am, saying that, well that's just stupid."**

*"So why the hell would you believe the priest who tells you the Jews were bad people? That same priest forgets to tell you that Jesus was Jewish himself, he was a rabbi, that same priest tells you that you are bad and evil for being who you are, so why would he be telling the truth about one thing and not the other?"*

**"I never thought of it like that, but you are right, if he's lying about us being bad, then he's probably lying about those Jews too."**

*"Exactly. Especially given that his entire religion is based around Jewish principles and the teachings of a Jewish person, doesn't it seem odd for them to dislike Jewish people so much?"*

**"So why do you think that Jews are so much like us? They have pale skin so they are white people and all white people have treated us rough."**

*"Because whiteness isn't about skin tone, it's about privilege. What if I told you that in all of history, only one people was treated as badly as us by white people? That these people were marginalized, oppressed and treated like second and third class citizens even though some of them, physically, look exactly like most white people? Now what if I told you that these people who sometimes look exactly like white people, were never allowed to be safe or comfortable and, in fact, every few decades would be murdered and scattered?"*

**"Seriously? But they looked like white people!"**

*"Yes, but they were always made aware that no matter how white they might look, they were not in fact white people and therefore they were always LESSER and not safe .because no matter how high they got, they could lose it in a second. Does that sound familiar to you at all?"*

**"Yeah that sounds like Métis people hahahaha."**

*“Yup. So now do you understand why my Jewish friends understand us better than white people? Because they aren’t white either, they understand better than anyone how crappy it is to work hard and be marginalized for the blood you carry. But they were given a chance to fight for a state of their own and they took it. We can learn a lot from them.”*

**“But I thought they stole the land from the Palestinians?”**

*“Did Indians steal the land from the white man here in Canada?”*

**“Don’t say such stupid things, everyone knows Indians were here before white people, how could we steal what was already ours?”**

*“Exactly. And the Jews were in Israel for 3,000 years before the Arabs, so you tell me how the Jews are stealing land that was theirs? The Jews were kicked off their land just like we were, with only a few of them staying on their traditional lands just like us, the people who kicked them off their lands were the Arabs who showed up 700 years after Jesus. That’s important to know because Arabs come from a place called the Arabian Peninsula NOT the Levant. They were outsiders, like the white people here. So if we regained our lands would we be stealing the land from the white people who kicked us off our land or would we simply be regaining our lands? Because the Jews are returning to their traditional lands, how does one steal what one already owns?”*

**“I thought Arabs were from there forever. But if they came from somewhere else and just took over, then they are just colonists like white people.”**

*“ Yes exactly and that’s why arguing that Israel is the colonists and the Palestinians are indigenous should bother you, because by making that argument, you are arguing that white people will eventually become indigenous too.”*

**“Wow I never thought of that, white people can’t become indigenous just by conquering us, so that means other colonizers can’t either. So what if the Palestinians are just Jews who converted to avoid being killed. Aren’t they still indigenous?”**

*“ Ok, let me ask you a question, if you have mixed blood on two sides, but deny one sides culture, language and traditions, but adopt those of the other side, and you self identify as that side, what are you? Really? Are you really a mixed blood person anymore or have you completely self identified as one side. Because to be indigenous you must demonstrate that you have ties to a community, you have indigenous language and culture and religion. if you deny those things and adopt the culture, religion and language of the colonizer, are you really indigenous anymore?”*

**“I don’t think so, that’s like all those Métis who tell everyone they are white.”**

*“Exactly, they don’t want to be Indians, so we don’t force them to be. It’s their choice, but they don’t get to say “I’m not an Indian, I’m white, but I’m indigenous”. They are either Indians or they aren’t.” Is that clear?”*

**“Yeah I have a lot to think about.”**

A few weeks later, this friend joined some pro-Israel groups on Facebook and elsewhere and asked several questions. Now he wants to be more involved in some of the work I’m doing involving setting up cultural exchanges for Native and Jewish kids. So you see, sometimes, all you need, is the

right argument at the right time, and you can change hearts and minds.

Its Important to remember that even though some Jewish people are pale skinned, they are not in fact white. They were not the people who gave us spoiled rations, stole our land and gave us shiny beads in return. While I hesitate to allow our enemies to define us in any way, we must remember that to the government, all Indians are Indians no matter our blood quantum, and to the enemies of our Jewish brothers and sisters, all Jews are simply Jews. This is a burden we both share but we share it together and it suddenly becomes way less heavy.

*Ryan Bellerose is a Métis from Northern Alberta. His father, Mervin Bellerose, co-authored the Métis Settlements Act of 1989, which was passed by the Alberta legislature in 1990. This act cemented Métis land rights. Ryan founded Canadians for Accountability, a native rights advocacy group. He is also an organizer and participant in the Idle No More movement in Calgary, Alberta, and a proclaimed Zionist.*

## [Contents](#)



**Savage and Jew: A Shared Stereotype**  
by **Howard I. Schwartz**

The ability to see resemblances between ancient Judaism and savage religions was a result, at least in part, of the overlapping stereotypes of savages and contemporary Jews in the European imagination. Sifting through the writings on Judaism and heathenism during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, one finds striking similarities between the European conceptions of the Jew and the savage. As a Christian anti-type, both were pictured as less than fully human, falling somewhere in the great chain of being between human and ape. The savage and the Jew presented similar problems to Christians. In what ways could these peoples be rescued from their idolatrous practices and converted to the true faith? Not surprisingly, European writers relied on the same vocabulary and images to describe the religious practices of their Jewish contemporaries and the savages discovered in the New World. Jews trafficked with the Devil; they practiced ritual murder, especially the murder of innocent children .. Europeans leveled similar accusations at savages. Missionary and travel literature routinely described savage religious practices as devil worship and frequently reported the practice of cannibalism and child sacrifice ... Judaism and savage religions both lacked any redeeming moral qualities.

For these reasons, Europeans used similar language to describe Jewish and savage religious practices. This shared vocabulary is evident, for example, if one compares the seventeenth-century voyage literature on the savage with a similar sort of travel literature on Jews and Judaism. This "travel" literature on Jews and Judaism emerged in England during the early seventeenth century, when virtually no Jews were living in that country. Jews had been expelled from England in 1290, and only a relatively small number of Jews had entered England before the seventeenth century. English travelers who went abroad to other European countries brought back stories of their exotic visits to Jewish synagogues. Even after the Jews were readmitted to England in the mid-seventeenth century, numerous English writers report their visits to the local but still exotic synagogues. These reports are similar in tone and attitude to European accounts of savage religion. Compare, for example, Lescarbot's description of Brazilian religion in 1609 with some English accounts of Judaism from the same century:

As for the Brazilians, I find by the account of Jean de Léry, that not only are they like our savages, without any form of religion or knowledge of God, but that they are so blinded and hardened in their cannibalism that they seem to be in no wise capable of the Christian doctrine. Also they are visibly tormented and beaten by the devil. . . . When one tells the Brazilians that they must believe in God, they fully agree, but by and by they forget their lesson and return to their own vomit, which is a strange brutishness, not to be willing at the least to redeem themselves from the devil's vexation by religion. (1914 [1611], 100-101)

In 1659, Samuel Pepys visited a synagogue during Simhat Torah, a lighthearted Jewish holiday. He has the following to say about that occasion:

"But, Lord! To see the disorder, laughing sporting and no attention, but confusion in all their service, more like brutes than knowing the true God, would make a man forswear ever seeing them more: and indeed I never did see so much, or could have imagined there had been any religion in the whole world so absurdly performed as this."

In 1662, John Greenhalgh also had occasion to visit a synagogue and remarks that "the Jews with their taleisim [i.e., prayer shawls] over their heads presented to the observer a strange, uncouth, foreign and... barbarous sight" (Glassman 1975, 96, 139-40).

The fact that Jews and savages were similarly stereotyped in the European imagination helped nourish the theory that the American Indians were originally of Jewish stock. Diego Duran, for example, concludes that the Indians must be descended from the Jews because of the similarities in their "way of life, ceremonies, rites, and superstitions, omens and hypocrisies." Duran also writes that "that which most forces me to believe that these Indians are of Hebrew lineage is the strange pertinacity they have in not casting away their idolatries and superstitions, living by them as did their ancestors, as David said in the 105th Psalm." In a similar argument for their common ancestry, Garcia notes that both peoples were timid, liars, and prone to ceremony and idolatry.

It is not surprising that European "travelers" described the religion of the Jews and savages in similar terms. After all, both savage religion and Judaism served as objects of contrast for European self-understandings, a technique that Hayden White (1978, 151) has called ostensive self-definition by negation. When "the need for positive self-definition asserts itself but no compelling criterion of self-identification appears, it is always possible to say something like: 'I may not know the precise content of my own felt humanity, but I am most certainly not like that.'" In European thought, Judaism and savage religion were often the "that's" in the landscape to -which one pointed:

The secondary literature on European views of both savages and Jews emphasizes how each served as foils for European views of Christianity:

The Indian whom the sixteenth century voyagers came to know was, more than anything else, a creature whose way of life showed Englishmen what they might be were they not civilized and Christian, did they not fully partake of the divine idea of order... The Indian became important for the English mind, not for what he was in and of himself, but rather for what he showed civilized men they were not and must not be (Pearce, 1967; 4-5)

The stories containing references to Jews, which in many instances were carried over from earlier centuries, could be used to point out the superiority of Christianity over Judaism and to strengthen the faith of Christians who questioned the teachings of the church. The Jews, shrouded in legend, were an excellent foil, and the clerics used them often in their sermons. Thus, if they did not exist in the flesh, their imaginary spirits were resurrected to enhance the power of the church in the eyes of the faithful (Glassman 1975; 29)

Given the overlapping stereotypes of the Jew and the savage and the similar use to which such stereotypes were put, it is not surprising that numerous writers recognized commonalities between Judaism and savage religions. But there were other factors as well that enabled this inchoate anthropology of Judaism to emerge. One of the most important of these was the Bible itself.

## The Principle of Monogenesis

According to the biblical account of creation, all humanity derived from Adam, the original human entity whom God had created. All peoples, including even the savages in the Americas, were direct descendants of Adam and Adamic culture. The majority of Europeans who wrote on savage religions, including those discussed above, upheld this biblical premise of monogenesis. Consequently, European writers expected to find similarities between the religion of the savages and the religion of the ancients. Since savages were descendants of the original stock of humankind, savage religion contains traces of the original culture and religion. Indeed, it was only by finding such similarities that these writers believed they could identify the point in time when the separation and dispersion of various peoples had occurred. Such parallels and similarities, therefore, did not pose theological problems for these writers. On the contrary, they confirmed the veracity of the biblical story that all peoples derived from one original stock of humankind.

Writers did disagree on the precise moment in history when the savages of the New World had lost contact with the original human society. Those who believed the separation had occurred after the Jewish revelation treated savage practices and beliefs as corrupted but nonetheless recognizable derivatives of Mosaic Law. Other writers believed the American savages had lost contact with original humanity before the Jewish revelation and consequently the parallels in practice and belief could not be explained as a result of an earlier historical connection. To explain the similarities, these writers repeated the argument used by the early church fathers to explain the commonalities between Christianity and the pagan religions of antiquity. The similarities were the work of the Devil who was actively worshiped by the savages. In competing with God for the allegiance of humankind, the Devil had aped the practices of the divinely revealed religion. The savages' vile and abominable practices and beliefs were bastardizations of the true religion of Jews and Christians. Lescarbot, for example, offers this explanation for why the savages of New France, like the ancient Hebrews, performed certain religious practices following the birth of a child:

"They can render no reason for this [i.e., forcing the infant to swallow grease or oil], but that it is a custom of long continuance: whereupon I conjecture that the devil, who bath always borrowed ceremonies from the Church, as well in the ancient as in the new law, wished that his people, as I call them that believe not in God, and are out of the communion of saints, should be anointed like to God's people, which unction he hath made to be inward, because the spiritual unction of the Christian is so" (1914 [1614 3:80]).

It is now evident why a space in European discourse momentarily opened for an inquiry into the commonalities between ancient Judaism and savage religions. Such parallels did not yet pose a danger to the privileged status of revealed religion. The stock explanations available were sufficient to account for the similarities between ancient Judaism and heathenism without undermining the assumption that the Jewish religion had been revealed. These similarities were either the survivals of revealed religion that had been nearly obliterated by the human tendency to superstition, error, and

sin, or the work of the Devil who seduced humanity away from God by inventing perverted versions of divine religion.

These first anthropologists of Judaism had no way of anticipating the use to which reason would put their comparisons. They had no way of knowing that they had helped prepare the ground for an all-out attack on the privileged status of Judaism and Christianity. Yet, in pointing to the commonalities between ancient Judaism and contemporary heathenism, these writers had unknowingly fashioned what would shortly prove to be one of the greatest weapons in the rationalist attack on revealed religion (Frantz 1967; Gay 1968, 15). Such commonalities generated a suspicion about the validity of the distinction between revealed religion and superstition. The deists, atheists, and materialists of the eighteenth century pointed to these parallels to prove that the distinction between Judaism and contemporary paganism was untenable.

It was this attack that subsequently made an anthropological discourse on Judaism impossible. Once it became clear that commonalities between the religion of ancient Jews and contemporary savages posed a problem for the unique and privileged status of Christianity, various strategies were devised to neutralize this powerful weapon of the Enlightenment. New schemes were developed to put such a chasm between ancient Judaism and savage religions that subsequent writers would no longer find it meaningful or relevant to draw attention to those similarities that had so intrigued earlier writers. In this way, the space that had momentarily cleared for a serious comparison of ancient Judaism and savage religions disappeared for another two centuries. It is to this attack and recovery that our attention now turns.

### **Judaism and Paganism in the Light of Reason**

As reason emerged as a respected source of knowledge late in the seventeenth century and continued so throughout the eighteenth, nothing remained unchanged in the landscape of European discourse. Facts that previously posed no problem to revealed religion now undermined it. Arguments marshaled in support of revelation now threatened its claim to divine origin. One such reversal involved the use of the observed similarities between ancient Judaism and contemporary and ancient paganism. Both the biblical story of creation and the overlapping religious stereotypes of Jews and savages had created an expectation that such commonalities would exist. But as reason vied with revelation for recognition as the ultimate source of all knowledge, these similarities became a potent weapon in the rationalist critique of revelation.

In the vocabulary of the Enlightenment, revelation referred to the religion of both the Old and New Testaments. For orthodox Christian thinkers, the revelation of the Old Testament verified the truth of the Christian revelation. The New Testament incessantly quoted from the Old to show how various incidents in the life of Christ were foreshadowed in the writings of the Hebrew prophets. The fact that Christ fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament provided the proof of his messiahship. The validity of the Christian revelation, therefore, required an affirmation that the Jewish testament was of divine origin. As the orthodox Christian of Thomas Morgan's *Moral Philosopher* (1738, 15) puts it, "What I mean by Christianity, strictly speaking, or reveal'd as distinguish'd from natural Religion, is

the revealed Truths or Doctrines of Revelation as contained in the Books of the Old and New Testaments."

It is not surprising that in attacking the idea of revelation and traditional forms of Christianity, rationalists felt obliged to ridicule the religion of the Jews. In launching this attack, deists in England, France, and Germany revived the strategies of ancient pagan philosophers who had attacked Christianity by heaping scorn on Jews and Judaism. Anthony Collins (1976 [1724], 26, 31) is representative of this impulse when he notes that if the proofs for Christianity drawn from the Old Testament

...are valid proofs then is Christianity strongly and invincibly established on its true foundations... because a proof drawn from an inspir'd book, is perfectly conclusive... On the other side, if the proofs for Christianity from the Old Testament be not valid; if the arguments founded on those books be not conclusive; and the prophecies cited from thence be not fulfilled; then has Christianity no just foundation!

One powerful strategy in the emerging rationalist critique involved pointing out the commonalities between revelation as embodied in the Old and New Testaments and contemporary heathenism. These commonalities generated a series of embarrassing questions for the idea of revelation. If one believed in a Devil, as some defenders of revelation did, how could one be sure that only the rites and beliefs of paganism were the work of the Devil? Perhaps those of Judaism and Christianity had a similar origin. Why should one believe the miracles and prophecies of the Old and New Testaments but reject those claimed on behalf of contemporary savage religions? On what grounds could one confidently affirm the revelation to Moses yet deny revelations claimed by other peoples? Was there any fundamental difference between heathen sacrifices and the rites of sacrifice that God had commanded the Israelites to perform? Why should human sacrifices of savages be treated as abominations when God had sacrificed a son?

Questions such as these helped subvert the longstanding dichotomy between revelation, on the one hand, and paganism, heathenism, or superstition, on the other? From the perspective of critical deists, these dichotomies were problematic because revelation did not have an exclusive claim to truth and because savages did not have a monopoly on superstition. Savages had sometimes discovered the fundamental truths of reason. Revelation, for its part, contained countless practices and beliefs that were antithetical to reason. For rationalists these facts confirmed their basic contention that reason makes revelation redundant and unnecessary. Everything that one needs to know can be derived by the exercise of reason alone. Otherwise principles of reason should not have been known to savages who had never been exposed to revelation.

**Revelation Has No Monopoly on Truth, Heathenism Is Not the Only Superstition**

Rationalists argued that the essential principles of religion could be known through the exercise of reason alone. By exercising that faculty, one could learn that God exists, that one has a duty to worship God, that virtue and piety are the best methods of worship, and that one should repent of one's sins.<sup>9</sup> Since these principles were accessible to all persons through the use of reason, revelation itself was unnecessary. There was no need for God to publish "externally" what could readily be known from the internal light of reason.

The first prong of the deist attack involved the attempt to show that what revelation defined as its own essence was already known or at least accessible to savages. Without any revelation at all, humans in all times and all places could discover those basic articles of religion if only they relied upon reason. This Religion of Nature was, as Tindal puts it, "as old as creation." The basic articles of the Jewish and Christian revelation simply represented a re-publication of principles already known to Adam.

But the similarities between revelation and superstition were formal as well as substantive. Heathens legitimated their religions with precisely the same kinds of "external" proofs used to validate Judaism and Christianity. Miracles, prophecies, revelations, and ancient traditions from the ancestors were invoked by peoples the world over to defend their respective religions.

These similarities, rationalists argued, forced defenders of revelation to adopt a double standard. Their own external proofs were trustworthy; those of other religions were false.

Revelation thus failed to see that what it named as superstition in other religions was also contained in itself. As Voltaire (1962 [1764], 476) succinctly puts it, "It is therefore plain that what is fundamental to one sect's religion passes for superstition with another sect." From the rationalist perspective, the similarity between the claims of revelation and heathenism left defenders of revelation with but two options: if they continued to ridicule pagan claims to truth, they would have to criticize the identical kinds of claims made on behalf of revelation. Alternatively, if they continued to verify revelation in traditional ways, they would have to recognize the validity of those claims made by others. Either option signified revelation's demise. The first option would destroy revelation's foundation; the second would necessitate accepting the truth of religions in fundamental disagreement with it.

To Enlightenment thinkers, in the light of reason the doctrine of election also seemed absurd. According to this doctrine, God had made the divine will known to specific groups of people, first the Jews and subsequently the Gentiles. But numerous other peoples in the world had not been aware of these revelations. It followed that only the elect would know what to do in order to achieve future happiness. The idea of election thus presupposed an absurd notion of God.

Some deists considered the observance of the Sabbath to rest on an equally ridiculous conception of God. "What strange notions must the bulk of mankind have of the Supreme Being, when he is said to have rested and been refreshed" (Tindal 1730, 227). The doctrines of transubstantiation and the trinity are other examples of absurdities rationalists found at the very heart of revelation.

In addition to such problematic doctrines, revealed religion contained numerous practices that were as contrary to reason as any found among the heathens. The ancient Jews, for example, practiced circumcision and animal sacrifice, customs as barbaric as the rites of mutilation and sacrifices found in other religions.

Some of reason's most strident supporters went so far as to claim that human sacrifice, a practice so common among savages, was also condoned in the religion of the ancient Hebrews. The fact that Abraham responded to God's command to sacrifice Isaac (Gen. 22) and that Jephthah sacrificed his daughter in fulfillment of a vow (Judg. 11:29-40) indicates that the notion of human sacrifice was compatible with the religion of the ancient Jews (Morgan 1738, 131-33; Tindal 1730, 83; Voltaire 1962 [1764, 325]). The idea of human sacrifice was also central to the Christian doctrine that God had sacrificed his own son.

While certain practices of revelation were considered particularly absurd, the deists considered all rites problematic. Any of the practices that had been instituted by revelation and that were not derived by reason (which included all of them) were simply superstitions.

The various rites and ceremonies contained in revelation were not different in essence from those savage practices reported by travelers. All rites and ceremonies owed their origin to the avarice of priests who introduced such practices under the guise of revelation and thereby made themselves indispensable. " 'Tis then no wonder the number of Gods multiply'd, since the more Gods, the more Sacrifices, and the Priests had better fare" (Tindal 1730, 8i; see also Herbert quoted in Gay 1968, 35).

As is now obvious, rationalists sought to replace the old dichotomy between revelation and superstition with an alternative opposition, Natural Religion versus superstition.

It is very well known, that there is, and always have been, two sorts or species of Religion in the world. The first is the Religion of Nature, which consisting in the eternal, immutable Rules and principles of moral Truth, Righteousness or Reason, has been always the same, and must for ever be alike apprehended, by the Understandings of all Mankind, as soon as it comes to be fairly proposed and considered. But beside this, there is another sort or Species of Religion, which has been commonly call'd positive, instituted, or revealed Religion, as distinguish'd from the former. And to avoid circumlocution, I shall call this the political Religion, or the Religion of Hierarchy. (Morgan 1738, 94)

This new way of slicing the pie completely subverted the old. In this new scheme, ancient Judaism, Christianity, and paganism met one another and mutually recognized their common nature and origin. Each had a share in Natural Religion and superstition:

What reason has a Papist, for instance, to laugh at an Indian, who thinks it contributes to his future happiness to dye with a cow's tail in his hands, while he lays as great a stress on rubbing a dying Man with oil? Has not the Indian as much right to moralize this action of his, and shew its significancy, as the Papist any of his mystick rites, or Hocus Pocus tricks? which have as little foundation in the nature or reason of things. (Tindal 1730, 112)

According to reason there were simply no grounds for a radical distinction between Judaism and Christianity, on the one hand, and the religion of the heathens or savages, on the other.

In sum, rationalists capitalized on an opportunity made possible by revelation itself. Revelation predisposed travelers and missionaries to see resemblances between ancient Judaism and savage religions. Revelation taught that all peoples were descendants of one original human ancestor. That portrayal of human history led explorers and voyagers to the conclusion that religions in the New World had degenerated from religions of antiquity. Moreover, revelation had already generated a stereotype of ancient Judaism that was equally applicable to new heathen practices. In the sixteenth century, adherents to revelation did not yet anticipate the damaging implications of assimilating the religion of the Jews to that of the savages. But not long afterwards others did. The deists and other proponents of reason realized that such correspondences presented a serious problem for many of revelation's claims. In their judgment, the similarities between the revealed religions and ancient and modern varieties of paganism indicated that revelation was but another superstition, a fabrication of priests whose intent was self-aggrandizement.

*Howard I. Schwartz, PhD, (Howard Eilberg-Schwartz) is an author, business executive, consultant, and social critic. His provocative writing is inspired by the unusual journey he has made in his life from seminary to Silicon Valley. Trained originally as a rabbi, he went on to receive a PhD from Brown University, and spent the early part of his career as a professor of religious studies, before moving to the for-profit sector, where he has worked for more than ten years as an executive in the high tech software industry, for both startups and a public company. His award winning *The Savage in Judaism* (Indiana University) has been recognized as a trend setting work in biblical studies. [www.HowardISchwartz.com](http://www.HowardISchwartz.com)*

## [Contents](#)

### **Simple Truths: A Cree Indian Explains a 2,000 Year Old Rabbinic Teaching**

**By Nathan Elberg**

Our Sages teach us that our livelihood is in the hands of God. While we have to go through the motions, our success has little to do with our machinations. Rather, it's a reflection of what God has ascertained is best for us, whether it be immense wealth, terrible poverty, or somewhere in between. All is in the hands of God, and if we want financial success, we should address our request to heaven, rather than to the stockbroker.

It's a simple concept, and an easy principle for a pious person to accept intellectually. But it's much harder to believe in your gut. For example, when you have the opportunity to make extra money by cheating, is that money part of God's plans for you? Conversely, how will God protect your retirement savings when the CEO of the corporation in which you've invested commits massive fraud? If you recite a lot of Tehillim (psalms), is God going to suppress your boss's free will when you ask for a raise?

Two thousand years ago, when our Sages taught about our livelihood being in the hands of God, the economy was much simpler. If it rained, the farmers would be successful. If a Greek or Roman authority overtaxed the people, God could smite him, and solve the problem. If God sent forth the animals, hunters would be successful.

In succeeding centuries, in Babylonia, Spain, eastern Europe and elsewhere, the climate and other natural factors remained strong forces in the economy. Although trade, feudalism and war influenced people's well-being, the connection between livelihood and God was still clear.

With the industrial revolution, the western world turned its devotion to a new deity, progress. This theology placed the illusion of control in the hands of man. For the elite, for those controlling the means of production, the illusion seemed quite real. For the masses of workers, for the peasants, their livelihood became even more capricious. The weight of the burdens of the new taskmasters obscured the hand of God.

Robert Visitor, a Cree Indian living in the small community of Wemindji, taught me the meaning of Chazal's (our sages') teaching about livelihood. I was a young anthropologist, visiting the Quebec coast of James Bay on behalf of the provincial native political association, doing research to fight the James Bay hydroelectric project. Bobby and I had become friends, getting drunk together on the Anglican church's sacramental wine. Over the next few years, as I traveled back and forth to the James Bay coast, I always felt at home at Bobby's, and I tried to make him feel welcome when he visited the urban commune where I lived.

We were spending the winter in the sub-arctic forest in a region that was to be flooded by the hydro project, intending to trap all the fur-bearing animals. The nearest other people were fifty to a hundred miles away. There was no radio or telephone. The only roads were the rivers and lakes we paddled, or after freeze-up, walked along.

We had flown into the forest in the early fall. There were seventeen of us: three families, living in a teepee, going out on day-trips to set or check traps and fish nets. Our food was mainly fresh fish, rabbit, partridge and beaver, supplemented by oatmeal, coffee, tea and flour. Mostly, we lived off the land.

I didn't mind the minus-forty temperature. But I couldn't bring myself to stick my hands in a hole in the ice of the frozen lake to take the fish out of the net strung underneath. Bobby smiled, and explained that the water was warmer than the air.

The hunting, fishing, and trapping was successful. Current anthropological research has indicated that many hunting societies lived relatively comfortable lives, much better off than the more "advanced" pastoral or farming societies that succeeded them. As I set rabbit traps, butchered a beaver, and filtered bugs out of the lake water, I had no thoughts about danger, hunger, or God doing anything not nice to me.

One November morning, nobody went hunting. We had freezing rain, and it was impossible to hunt, check fishnets, traps, or anything like that. At best, we could edge down the slippery path to the lake, re-open the hole in the ice, and draw drinking water.

On the second day of freezing rain, again nobody went hunting. No one seemed particularly concerned.

On the third day of freezing rain, I asked Bobby "what happens if the freezing rain keeps up?"

"We starve," he shrugged.

It was an interesting idea. But, I thought, "what if the federal government lowers interest rates to increase consumer spending? How about if the CEO announces a generous dividend? Lower taxes? Socialist revolution?"

These would not change anything. Nothing man could do would make any difference. If God kept the freezing rain going, we'd starve. If God improved the weather, we'd be fine.

This is a direct one-on-one relation with the concept that our livelihood is in G`d's hand. Bobby and his fellow Cree understood that teaching at a gut level. It wasn't an idea to be learned and integrated. It's part of the world. We don't have to be taught that the sky is above us, rain falls downward or that we get older over time. The Cree hunters of the northern forest know in the same way that our livelihood is in the hands of God.

We have been alienated from this knowledge by complex economies, high and low technology, and the mythology generated by progress. We can't know it instinctively, so we must rely on our Torah learning to allow us to grasp the wisdom hidden by the world around us.

A corollary of the teaching that our livelihood is in the hands of God is that we shouldn't worry about what we will eat tomorrow. When Bobby said "we'll starve," I could not be as blasé as him. I was concerned, and wanted to do something. Bobby knew that our fate was in God's hands, and was quite comfortable with it.

By the age of thirty-seven, he was periodically crippled by arthritis and bad medicine. He attributed the arthritis to traveling in the rain in the forest for many days. I blamed the bad medicine on government policies that treated natives as an annoying obligation. The hospital in Montreal had him travel twelve hundred miles to give him cases of aspirin, telling him to take twenty-four pills a day. Maybe the plan was to dissolve his stomach so they wouldn't have to bother with his arthritis, which on some days was so bad that he couldn't move out of bed. I brought him to my doctor, who changed Bobby's diet, eased the arthritis, and saved his stomach.

Bobby had a bad back. When he was a child in a church-run residential school, a teacher heard him speaking Cree, rather than English to a friend. As punishment, the teacher smashed him on the back with a heavy stick. Decades later, when beating and molesting young natives was no longer considered polite, the Chief in Wemindji told Bobby that he should file a claim for the damage he suffered from that punishment; he could probably get ten thousand dollars. As Bobby recounted this to me he was puzzled: what would he do with ten thousand dollars? Why would he need so much money? Bobby meant it. It wasn't a cliché or a bargaining point with him. It was him.

I've been in business negotiations with some of the wealthiest people in Canada. As they bargained over a transaction, they asked what difference it would make to get a better price; what difference would the extra money make in one's life?

Sitting on their tens of millions of dollars, those real-estate moguls did not impress me in their renunciation of the value of wealth. Bobby, who gave away his money as soon as he got it, who didn't have a bank account or even a phone, was really not interested in ten thousand dollars.

In *Pirkei Avot*, Ethics of the Fathers, we are told "Who is wealthy- he who is satisfied with his lot." It's a theme repeated in folk songs, in movies... It's usually written into the song or script by people

with lots of money, and according to some is a capitalist plot to keep the poor from complaining about their impoverishment.

Bobby didn't calculate that he could use the money to buy some luxuries for his modest home, take a trip, or purchase a savings bond. Bent over by arthritis, without a penny to his name (and, at the time I last saw him, trying unsuccessfully to recover from a massive heart attack) Bobby was satisfied with what he had. It was his nature.

Bobby took me into his life, he disrupted his family, he traveled a thousand miles for me. If we went by bus, train, or chartered helicopter, it was the same to him. When I bought him an expensive shotgun as a gift, he didn't mind that it only worked properly with expensive shells. Bobby didn't have any money anyway, so whether the ammunition cost a lot or a little was irrelevant.

Bobby was a country & western singer. He considered himself Johnny Cash, but without the cash. He wrote what became a theme song for his people's resistance to the James Bay Hydro Project mentioned above. The refrain was straightforward:

Building dams on our land is not right

All the things we have will be destroyed

If you fellow Indians stand up and fight with all your might,

If you fellow Indians stand up and fight...

His people signed a multimillion dollar deal with the government, allowing the dams to be built, rivers diverted, hunting grounds flooded. It might have been a good deal had the government lived up to its obligations. Bobby was a bit upset when I satirically re-wrote his theme:

Building dams on our land is all right

Though the things we have will be destroyed

If you fellow Indians stand up and sign with all your might,

If you fellow Indians stand up and sign...

*Pirkei Avot* also teaches us that we are obliged to honor our teachers, even a person from whom we have learned only a single letter. Robert F. Visitor was a man of simple wants, uneducated, an

alcoholic. He taught me deep truths, not through lessons or lectures, but through living, and I honor his memory.

## [Contents](#)

## **Links:**

Ryan Bellerose. "Battling the Boycott." Sun News. December 20, 2013. Video.

[http://www.sunnewsnetwork.ca/video/2955580883001?fb\\_action\\_ids=10151781789405863&fb\\_action\\_types=og.likes&fb\\_source=aggregation&fb\\_aggregation\\_id=288381481237582](http://www.sunnewsnetwork.ca/video/2955580883001?fb_action_ids=10151781789405863&fb_action_types=og.likes&fb_source=aggregation&fb_aggregation_id=288381481237582)

Jenny Kane. "Navajo Indian Conference seeks Farmers." Daily Times. Farmington News. March 7, 2013.

[http://www.daily-times.com/farmington-news/ci\\_22887750/navajo-israel-conference-seeks-farmers](http://www.daily-times.com/farmington-news/ci_22887750/navajo-israel-conference-seeks-farmers)

Jay Corwin. "Native American Academics do not endorse the boycott of Israeli academics." Times of Israel. December 25, 2013.

<http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/native-american-academics-do-not-endorse-the-boycott-of-israeli-academics/>

"Day of Dignity in South Dakota: Scenes from Crow Creek Reservations." Islamic Relief. June 28, 2010

<http://www.irusa.org/blog/day-of-dignity-in-south-dakota-scenes-from-crow-creek-reservation/>

David A. Yeagley. "American Indians Aren't Like Palestinians." Badeagle.com. April 9, 2002.

[http://www.badeagle.com/html/arent\\_pales.html](http://www.badeagle.com/html/arent_pales.html)

Gyasi Ross. "Why I, as a Native American, Support the Palestinian People." The Progressive. June 25, 2002.

[http://progressive.org/media\\_1530](http://progressive.org/media_1530)

Corrine Clyne. "How Israel Changed My Life." The Times of Israel. September 1, 2013.

<http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/how-israel-changed-my-life/>

Allison Deger. "Poet Joy Harjo Responds to Boycott Demands over Israeli Performance by adding a West Bank Visit." Mondoweiss. December 12, 2012.

<http://mondoweiss.net/2012/12/poet-joy-harjo-responds-to-boycott-demands-over-israeli-performance-by-adding-a-west-bank-visit.html>

Gale Courey Toensing. "Redwashing Panel Follows Academic Council's Boycott of Israel." AUB. American University of Beirut. November 31, 2013.

<http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2013/12/31/redwashing-panel-follows-academic-associations-boycott-israel-152930>

Harlan McKosato. "Building a Navajo-Jewish Connection." Santa Fe New Mexico. October 25, 2014.

[http://www.santafenewmexican.com/opinion/local\\_columns/building-a-navajo-jewish-connection/article\\_b20b4037-2f60-5741-afbd-30f498e3c649.html](http://www.santafenewmexican.com/opinion/local_columns/building-a-navajo-jewish-connection/article_b20b4037-2f60-5741-afbd-30f498e3c649.html)