

Burying the (Uncle) Tomahawk

Kristina Ackley and Cristina Stanciu, eds. *Laura Cornelius Kellogg: Our Democracy and the American Indian and Other Works*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2015. 336pp.

Paul McKenzie-Jones. *Clyde Warrior: Tradition, Community, and Red Power*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2015. 256pp.

Progressive Era Oneida activist Laura “Minnie” Cornelius Kellogg literally wore many, many hats—mostly of the lavish, Edwardian variety. Cold War era Ponca activist Clyde Warrior typically wore just one hat: his characteristic cowboy hat. That trivial distinction notwithstanding, both activists figuratively wore many hats in their lifelong commitment to improving conditions for Native people in Indian Country and beyond. Indeed, despite emerging from different historical contexts and tribal nations, these two vastly important figures in modern Native American history are more easily linked by their commonalities than their contrasts.

Kellogg and Warrior both worked during eras in which the United States federal government sought to assimilate Indian people into Anglo middle-class culture as a means toward solving its persistent “Indian problem.” Both countered by advocating tribal self-government, retention and recovery of tribal land, and cultural self-determination. Both were grounded in and shaped by their tribal communities and obligations. Both were firebrand intellectuals, capable of maneuvering within many worlds, and not just two.

Kellogg and Warrior operated in the spaces between the teeth of colonization. Both taught other Indian people how to do the same. Both placed treaty rights at the center of their wider messages. Both fought for Indian economic independence. Both pursued all of these agendas on Indian terms, with Indian futures in mind. Clyde Warrior was a principal architect of the 1960s “Red Power” movement, built on what historian Paul McKenzie-Jones identifies as a foundation of community, culture, and tradition. To Warrior, Red Power meant Native communities’ strength and right to preserve Indian culture, traditions, and integrity while also succeeding in the contemporary world. Given this, it’s fair to suggest that, however anachronistic, Minnie Kellogg, too, fought for Red Power.

Paul McKenzie-Jones’s scholarly biography, *Clyde Warrior: Tradition, Community, and Red Power*, emphasizes the influential Ponca student-activist’s tribal cultural roots. Whereas prior studies situate Warrior within the wider Red Power movement that gained greatest visibility during the 1969 Indians of All Tribes Alcatraz Occupation and the American Indian Movement’s (AIM) early 1970s heyday, McKenzie-Jones employs an impressive corpus of oral history interviews to excavate deeper details of Warrior’s tribal background. There is a *Bildungsroman* element to this book, but one that ends less in triumph than tragedy as Warrior died at the young age of 28. The triumph resonates posthumously, however, as Warrior’s message inspired and informed those Red Power activists who followed in his dancesteps.

Born in Oklahoma’s Ponca community in 1939, Clyde Warrior descended from traditional chiefs on both sides of his parental lineage. Raised by his grandparents, he developed a talent for drum making at a young age. McKenzie-Jones characterizes Warrior as a sensitive and deeply spiritual

young man who gained a reputation as a champion fancydancer on the powwow circuit and boasted an exhaustive knowledge of traditional songs. Many among his generation grew up railing against their parents' apparent failures to protect tribal cultures, lands, and treaty rights—to *act* sovereign. They were children of World War II veterans and relocation program participants who chased a series of raised expectations that the federal government mostly failed to meet. As a result, Warrior's generation no longer trusted negotiating Indian futures with the federal government. By the early 1960s they well understood that no matter how hard they tried they could not overcome, or even mitigate, the vast power differential between the settler state and the nations within. Warrior described the previous generation as one featuring the "indignity of Indians with hats in their hands pleading to powerful administrations for a few crumbs" (McKenzie-Jones, 104). So the next generation sought a solution by turning inward to tribal communities and traditions, instead of moving outward into the settler state.

In 1961, as a young college student in Oklahoma, Warrior ran a successful campaign for president of the Southwest Regional Indian Youth Council, during which he for the first time opened a speech with his famous assertion, "I am a full-blood Ponca Indian. This is all I have to offer. The sewage of Europe does not run through these veins." That same year he joined a series of summer American Indian Affairs workshops led by former Indian New Dealer D'Arcy McNickle (Cree) and World War II veteran Bob Thomas (Cherokee) in Boulder, Colorado. While McNickle mentored Warrior, he also represented the Indian Country establishment leadership. At the 1961 American Indian Chicago Conference, Warrior and his emerging cohort of young, disillusioned Indian activists rebuked the old guard, labeling them "Uncle Tomahawks" for their tendency toward compromising with the United States federal government.

The Red Power generation disowned its national Indian activism progenitors, and instead embraced traditional tribal leaders such as Phillip Deere (Creek), Henry Crow Dog (Lakota) and Frank Fools Crow (Lakota). On one hand this was essential to a Red Power organizing principle that emphasized cultural authenticity. But at what cost? Was there a missed opportunity for greater synergy? Despite Warrior's admonition against working within the system, that approach would continue to matter, even during the American Indian Movement's zenith. Consider for example the numerous important contributions the Native American Rights Fund (NARF) has made on behalf of tribal treaty rights and Indian civil rights since its inception in 1970. Maybe there is no NARF without Warrior. But it is also fair to suggest there is no Warrior without McNickle.

Warrior's stature as a vibrant and combative spokesman for the young Red Power movement grew across subsequent years, especially through his leadership position within the National Indian Youth Council. Meanwhile the generational and ideological gulf reflected in his strained relationship with McNickle only widened. Eventually it grew to include fellow young, influential intellectual Vine Deloria Jr. (Dakota), the president of the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) who would go on to write the watershed *Custer Died for Your Sins* (1969).

This is where McKenzie-Jones falters in an otherwise impressive book poised for adoption in undergraduate courses. He perhaps allowed himself to get too close to his subject—one known for his gravitational charisma. Did McNickle deserve such derision? Did Deloria owe Warrior

more attention in *Custer Died for Your Sins*—more than what McKenzie-Jones suggests is a backhanded compliment? He sides with Warrior’s dismissal of McNickle’s proposed Point IX program for reservation rehabilitation by claiming the program “promised ultimate tribal acculturation into mass American society” (McKenzie-Jones, 102). This misrepresents what McNickle and NCAI advocated. They designed Point IX to reverse the termination policy, restore lands to tribal ownership, provide job training, and to establish a revolving credit fund for tribal community and business development. McKenzie-Jones contrasts this with Warrior’s brand of self-determination, which “entailed sustained tribal political and economic independence” (McKenzie-Jones, 102). The distinctions are not readily discernible. This might sound like nitpicking, but it reflects a persistent trend in scholarship on Red Power to pit one group of national leaders or one generation against another. It is tempting to think this is a product of the long shadow the American Indian Movement cast on the topic of Indian activism. To no uncertain degree, militant Red Power’s legitimacy depended on NCAI’s delegitimization.

This amounts to an inversion of the old Civil Rights historiographic problem. Prior to a wave of revision, too much attention had been devoted to the MLK-led Civil Rights establishment that emerged from black churches, and not enough attention had been granted to the importance of radical Black Power architects and ideologies. This was even true for King, who had become quite radical prior to his assassination. Indian activism historiography, with few exceptions, has long privileged Dennis Banks, Russell Means, and Clyde Warrior, at the expense of a greater appreciation for Indian activists of a different stripe.

None of this is to suggest that Clyde Warrior was not singularly important, ingenious, intrepid, and inspirational. He remains all of those things, and scholarship on his life and impact is welcome and warranted. But McKenzie-Jones’s book often isolates him from his wider context and his Indian activism forebears. In recent years, scholars such as David Beck and Rosalyn LaPier, Philip Deloria, Frederick Hoxie, Paul Rosier, and Daniel Cobb, among others, have done much to rehabilitate the earlier Indian activists’ legacy. Certainly McKenzie-Jones’s *Clyde Warrior* belongs in their conversations. He provides immersive details, where they provide wider context. Going forward, the field would benefit from even more scholarship that bridges these gaps and puts activists from different generations in dialogue with each other in order to highlight continuities and a richer Indian activism tradition. And while we are at it, the field would benefit from more attention on Native women activists, such as Minnie Kellogg.

Not only did the Red Power generation owe much to the “Greatest (Indian) Generation,” it also could have located kindred spirits in the boarding school generation, from which Minnie Kellogg emerged as an important voice for Indian rights, uplift, and empowerment. She had fewer examples than Warrior to draw upon when attempting to lead her people across the treacherous terrain of turn-of-the-century reservation and assimilation programs. Indeed, she deserves the attention Kristina Ackley and Cristina Stanciu grant her in their edited volume *Laura Cornelius Kellogg: Our Democracy and the American Indian and Other Works*, which gathers Kellogg’s essays, poems, and speeches while making a convincing case for her inclusion in any discussion of the most visionary and courageous Indian intellectuals of the twentieth century.

In 1904, the *Los Angeles Times* described Kellogg as “a woman who would shine in any society” (Ackley and Stanciu, 3). Ackley and Stanciu support that assertion by emphasizing her

cosmopolitanism and mobility. Born on Wisconsin's Oneida Reservation in 1880, Kellogg first made a name for herself as an activist in 1903 when she stood for Indian land rights during a dispute in California. Newspapers covering the events christened her the "Indian Joan of Arc." After working as an instructor at the Sherman Institute for three years she enrolled at Stanford University, and then passed through Barnard College, Columbia University, and the University of Wisconsin. From there she began traveling throughout the United States, Canada, and Europe to advocate four primary goals: the development of Indian industries that could connect to viable markets; the primacy of labor exchange over currency exchange; tribal community planning; and government by consensus. Decades before it was fashionable among Red Power advocates, she argued for treaty rights and a continuation of the land trust arrangement while rejecting a subordinate role for Indians in the national economy and mainstream society. She believed these goals could be achieved without giving an inch in Indigeneity. In the context of federal policy initiatives designed to fully assimilate Native people into second-class American citizenship, Kellogg was not afraid to ask: Why not "keep an Indian an Indian?" (Ackley and Stanciu, xiii).

On Columbus Day 1911, in Columbus, Ohio, Kellogg solidified her position as a national Indian rights leader when she served on the first executive committee of the Society of American Indians (SAI). This national organization of "Red Progressives" formed around a boarding school and college-educated Indian vanguard that published its own journal and spread a message of Indian racial uplift while challenging any assumption that Native people passively accepted cultural isolation and second-class citizenship. SAI established a valuable precedent for subsequent national Indian activist groups to both improve on and emulate. Unlike SAI, NCAI drew its leadership and agendas from tribal governments and communities. AIM distinguished itself by departing from SAI's penchant for working within the established system to effect change. Yet, like those subsequent groups, SAI often suffered from internal division.

Indeed, Kellogg proved willing to dissent from her SAI cohort. She did not support the off-reservation boarding school system from which she and many of her colleagues graduated. She also argued for the preservation of reservations, and refused to compare them to prisons, as many did at the time. She modeled her Lolomi plan for reservation economic and community development on the urban planning initiatives she personally witnessed during a sojourn to Progressive Era Europe. (She would fit right in Daniel Rodgers's influential *Atlantic Crossings* (1998).) In this respect, she anticipated numerous urban Indians who across subsequent decades moved to cities not only to survive, but also to mine metropolises for resources and experiences that could benefit tribal communities.

Not unlike her SAI contemporary Carlos Montezuma, or Clyde Warrior for that matter, Kellogg's objections to the party line encumbered her with a reputation as an agitator, which gained her further notoriety after a series of arrests. And yet, it is a credit to her visionary intellect to suggest that, upon reading her works and learning about her life, it is not so easy to determine what, exactly, was so controversial about her agenda. Of course, that sentiment is shaped by historical hindsight. Kellogg does not seem so controversial on paper now precisely because we have the example of Clyde Warrior to draw upon.

Given this fresh scholarship on Indian activism it is tempting to think of a different Clyde. Is it not strange how the field has mostly written around and beyond the topic of the American Indian

Movement despite not covering it in the form of a comprehensive scholarly monograph? Why is that? Is it because AIM is such a controversial topic that few want to tackle it head on? Is it because surviving leaders continue to closely guard their legacies and primary sources? Is it because, given the movement's profound importance, any book-length study is guaranteed to disappoint? The day will come, soon I predict, when that floodgate will open. When it does, scholars would be wise to further consider whether AIM undermined previous decades of progress that earlier activists such as Kellogg and McNickle achieved. I am tempted to say no, and to adopt the popular vacillating opinion that AIM did a lot of good, and perhaps a lot of bad. Either way, this merits further inquiry. Whose vision won out? Or, whose vision lost? Do these questions matter?

Summarizing what was at stake in her efforts on behalf of Indian Country, Minnie Kellogg declared, "Whether he is a citizen or not, or whether he has lands or not, whether his trust funds continue or not, whether he is educated or ignorant, one thing remains unchanged with the Indian: he has to have bread and butter, he has to have a covering on his back, he has to live" (Ackley and Stanciu, 140). Compare this to an excerpt from a lecture Clyde Warrior delivered in 1966: "Of this I am certain, when a people are powerless and their destiny is controlled by the powerful, whether they be rich or poor, they live in ignorance and frustration because they have been deprived of experience and responsibility as individuals and communities" (McKenzie-Jones, 112). These statements suggest that, while the faces, voices, and contexts have changed, comparable challenges have persisted. It also suggests that scholars should continue seeking to bridge these generational divides, and to attempt more wide-angle studies of twentieth-century Native American history that link important figures across space and time. To quote Clyde Warrior, "How about it? Let's raise some hell."

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