

**“Our Destiny is Not Negotiable”: Native Brotherhoods and
Decolonization in Ontario’s Federal Prisons, 1970-1982**

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The White Man Cometh

And the pale wolves descended upon them;
And they were rabid and ravenous;
And they glutted themselves upon there (sic) flesh,
And when they had done,
They vomited out
Their “culture” upon them
And bleached the bones of
Their heritage,
With the hot sun
Of their tyranny.
T. Forsyth.¹

In November 1970, in a classroom at one Joyceville Federal Penitentiary, a group of incarcerated Aboriginal Canadians formed Ontario’s first Native Brotherhood.² Forsyth was a prisoner at this institution when he wrote the poem quoted above for the first edition of the organization’s publication, *The Talking Leaves*. Within the walls of the Joyceville Penitentiary, Forsyth railed against the legacy of colonialism through his involvement in the Native Brotherhood. The Native Brotherhood movement began in 1958 with the first Native Brotherhood in the Stoney Mountain Penitentiary in Manitoba and developed slowly over the next twelve years in Western Canada.³ With the beginning of the Joyceville Native Brotherhood, a new chapter began from a regional to a national movement. This movement challenged the notion that the Canadian corrections system could heal Aboriginal inmates while remaining rooted in fundamentally western principles predicated on colonialist uses of Christian theology. Native Brotherhoods⁴ were grassroots, inmate run organizations within penitentiaries that recognized the social, political, economic, and cultural problems that contributed to alarming rates of incarceration among Aboriginal peoples in Canada. In recognizing the roots to the issues facing incarcerated Aboriginal peoples, they directly confronted state-sanctioned hegemony in innovative ways. From 1970 to 1982 the movement grew in both size and strength, creating the base from which they later successfully pressured the administrators of prisons to officially sanction Sweat and Pipe Ceremonies as recognized religious ceremonies.⁵ A number of left-wing philosophers and activists inspired Aboriginal

inmates who transformed the message of other race-based movements both inside and outside prisons to their particular context.⁶ Because the Brotherhoods saw the root of their marginalization in western culture and colonial practices, they argued that the solutions existed within their own cultural and spiritual heritage.⁷ In this way, Native Brotherhoods confronted the legacy of colonialism.

In practice, Native Brotherhoods and the Sisterhood used traditional cultural expressions, especially traditional spirituality, as a method of decolonization. While they did not utilize academic jargon, the ideas within the writings of both the spiritual leaders of the Brotherhood and inmates themselves reflected intellectual trends of the 1970s.⁸ As an expression of their anti-colonialism, Ontario's Native Brotherhoods rejected Christianity in its common practices, subscribing instead to traditional spirituality.⁹ These organizations were largely inmate-run, though they received personal, financial, and political support from a number of national Aboriginal associations. The most important of these supporting bodies were the Allied Indian and Métis Society (AIMS) and the Canadian Association in Support of Native Peoples (CANSP).

One of the most lasting and destructive legacies of colonialism that the Brotherhoods addressed was the colonized personality. According to Métis scholar Howard Adams, because "white society" consistently argued that Euro-Canadian cultures were superior, Aboriginal peoples began to believe themselves to be inferior.¹⁰ Adams' concept of the colonized personality points to an important, if understudied facet of colonialism, namely that colonialism was experienced on a deeply personal level. Recognizing the personal and private as the most significant impact of colonial discourse does not necessitate redefining what colonialism is, but rather repositions the activities of Aboriginal penal organizations as addressing one of the most important repercussions of colonialism. While colonialism operated at the economic, political, and social level, the personal impact on Aboriginal peoples was where the most insidious work of colonial practices took place. The penitentiary itself exacerbated the personal impact of colonialism as it operated as both a literal and metaphorical symbol of the colonial context. The undeveloped historical scholarship concerning Aboriginal responses to prisons is therefore surprising because prisons are a fascinating and enlightening window into both the operation of colonialism and the responses of Aboriginal inmates.¹¹ If one recognizes the attitudes and values that degraded Aboriginal peoples historically as a part of the colonial process, the actions of the Brotherhood movement which celebrated Aboriginal identities and customs acquires a new significance in the face of government and penal structures.

By the end of the 1960s, political movements for decolonization had reshaped the political and intellectual world, as “the aura of normality” of empires no longer held sway.¹² However, decolonization, as practiced elsewhere, was not wholly transferrable to Aboriginal peoples incarcerated in federal prisons. For example, Frantz Fanon’s prescription of violent rebellion against colonial rulers was not feasible in the prison environment.¹³ There are however, several intellectual linkages to be made between the Brotherhoods and other race-based decolonization movements both inside and outside prisons. Indeed, the transformative role of incarceration for many black leaders in the United States belies a larger trend where time in the penitentiary initiated a sense of cultural pride in contrast to what inmates viewed as a white system of oppression.¹⁴ One example was Malcolm X who ‘discovered’ the Nation of Islam while in prison; many Aboriginal inmates similarly learned about ‘the good Red Road’ and Aboriginal spirituality for the first time while in prisons.¹⁵ One Brotherhood member specifically noted that the black power movement in the United States inspired him to greater action because of the example of the American movement.¹⁶ In this way, Aboriginal inmates overcame the machinery of power of both the colonial state and modern panoptical institutions. Aboriginal inmates “refused to lay down and die,” suggesting a refusal to become, in Foucault’s words, a ‘docile body’ as Aboriginal spirituality turned what was docile into ‘dynamic bodies.’¹⁷ These connections illustrate how decolonization as practiced by Aboriginal inmates was one aspect of a larger global process applied to the unique cultural and political context of incarcerated Aboriginal peoples in Ontario.

While prisons were oppressive institutions, there were several reasons why they also became arenas for decolonizing the personality. The prison setting centralized troubled, disenfranchised, and embittered Aboriginal peoples, putting them in a setting where they could learn about Aboriginal spirituality. A great number of inmates had never been taught their own cultural and spiritual heritage prior to their incarceration.¹⁸ The prison was originally conceived as a reformatory where troubled individuals would be taught the saving grace of Christianity. Inmates responded to their situation spiritually, though it was through their culturally unique spiritual beliefs rather than through Christianity.¹⁹ In addition, the penal context proffered concrete concerns those inmates shared. In a damning critique of the criminal justice system, one Aboriginal inmate wrote, “You have put us in jail because we tried to live your way of life.”²⁰ In a letter read at a symposium on Aboriginals and the criminal justice system held at Carleton University on October 21st, 1976, Aboriginal inmate Robert O’Connor argued that to solve the problems Aboriginals faced in prisons one needed to see the origin of the problem, which he identified as colonialism. O’Connor empha-

sized the spiritual component of non-Aboriginal incursions by writing, “You mocked our spiritual ways and called us savages... You made us then, as now, prisoners of war...”²¹ Aboriginal inmates were aware that their problems were rooted in colonial reality, and actively responded to the colonial problems to better themselves in a uniquely Aboriginal way. To do this required decolonization of the personality, which Aboriginals worked towards in prisons through Native Brotherhoods.

One of the most important mechanisms for challenging the system in which they were entangled was the prison writings undertaken by the Brotherhoods. Philosopher Michael Hames-Garcia argued that Latino inmate experiences lend them to be not vital to understanding the limitations of positive law and establishing a theory of justice.²² Black prison revolutionary George Jackson argued that writing was one of the key strategies of prison radicalism.²³ Similar critiques of the penal system and musings on the implications of their imprisonment by Aboriginal inmates function as practical philosophical treatises on how one decolonizes. Every chapter of the Native Brotherhood movement had a newsletter, and it is in these publications that the inmates addressed their concerns regarding the institutions, expressed themselves through poetry, encouraged involvement in the movement, and advertised upcoming events, and developed their views on spirituality and decolonization.²⁴ Especially important was the frequent expression of the pride inmates had in their Aboriginal identity. These newsletters circulated amongst other Brotherhoods and the Sisterhood, and often these authors responded to each other and offered encouragement for one another.

Within the larger genre of prison writings, Brotherhood publications fit within the subset of the ‘prison press’ that began in Canada in the 1950s and gained traction within penal contexts in the following decades. While most prison periodicals were not racially specific in their authorship, in the 1970s Brotherhoods adopted this mechanism of expression for specifically Aboriginal concerns. Unlike the prison writings of well-known figures like Leonard Peltier who wrote for a general audience, inmates wrote specifically for other inmates, which is evident in the tone and the message behind their musings. This type of periodical provides an enlightening window into the worldviews of Aboriginal inmates, though censorship by the prison administration limited the messages they could convey. The editor of *Tribal Ways*, the publication of the Collins Bay Native Brotherhood, argued that this institutional censorship limited inmate critiques to general concerns such as social prejudice or courtroom inequities rather than singling out particular police agencies, religious organizations, politicians, or social agency.²⁵ By extension, historians must take a critical eye to the deeper

meanings behind what inmates wrote, comparing them with the much more vociferous criticisms that their leaders levied against the criminal justice system.²⁶

The spiritual beliefs expressed by Aboriginal peoples within prisons was not an absolute rejection of everything 'Western,' but was rather a cultural adaptation with many influences in the unique context of penal institutions. Most Aboriginal inmates and medicine men had Christian backgrounds, and the teachings of Christian spirituality influenced Aboriginal expressions of spirituality in the correctional context. Aboriginal activists attacked the correctional system and its use of Christian theology by using biblical and theological references to illustrate the misuse of Christianity. In spite of the critiques of the penal system, Native Brotherhoods promoted respect of other religions because, in their words, "our Great Spirit is other peoples god."²⁷ Unlike Christianity, argued the Brotherhood, the Great Spirit was not co-opted as a tool for expanding colonial power. Aboriginal expressions of spirituality and Christian exegesis were seen as two sides of the same coin. The one deity revealed himself or herself to different people groups in different ways. Thus, Native Brotherhoods did not reject the theology of Christianity outright, but rather rejected application of Christian dogma in penal settings.²⁸ Arthur Solomon described the ways prisons sullied Christian theology in uncompromising language by writing, "Prisons are an abomination. They are a blasphemy in the face of God. I cannot believe that God ever intended for any of her children to be locked up in iron cages behind stone walls."²⁹ For the Brotherhood movement, perceived misuse of Christianity was deemed equally offensive as a misuse of spirituality. If the Great Spirit was the same deity as the Christian God, albeit revealed in different ways, the use of the Christianity as a colonial tool was contradictory to the very nature the deity regardless of how individuals or cultures envisioned the deity.³⁰

While historians note the syncretism, parallels, and areas of convergence between traditional spirituality and Christianity, Aboriginal peoples emphasized practical differences in the context of Canadian criminal justice.³¹ Parallels notwithstanding, Aboriginal inmates and elders perceived considerable difference between Aboriginal perspectives on justice as informed by their spirituality and in the practical application of Christian doctrine in federal corrections. For example, the first prisons assumed that an individual could change behavior through religion, but Aboriginal customs indicated that it was the responsibility of the community to correct improper actions.³² While the Christian doctrine of salvation was predicated on a personal relationship with the divine, traditional spirituality saw the continuance of the tribe in its entirety as the result of living according to principles associated with spirituality.³³ A justice system predicated

on Aboriginal spirituality and cosmologies therefore would fundamentally differ from the Canadian criminal justice system. This difference became an avenue through which Aboriginal inmates voiced their dissent and attempted to implement uniquely Aboriginal forms of justice and healing. Native Brotherhoods rejected Christianity as practiced and instead focused on the unique contributions of their traditional spirituality.

While many aspects of traditional spirituality and Christianity can coexist or complement each other, the theological foundations of the penitentiary system run contrary to Aboriginal spirituality. While humanitarian reformers had turned the philosophical basis of the penitentiary system away from treating the crime as a sin, the traditional reformatory approach to Aboriginal peoples persisted. The 'Christianizing mission' lost ground in the Mid-Twentieth century, but the 'civilizing mission' did not.³⁴ Christianity was no longer used to justify the imposition of correctional procedures on a colonized people, but western worldviews still dominated the penitentiary system. Inmates continued to reject the imposition of colonial practice through their use of Aboriginal spirituality regardless of the current philosophical thrust of corrections.

Because the Canadian justice system was built on the foundation of theological and philosophical contributions of Christianity, rejecting certain precepts of Christian thought was tantamount to rejecting the criminal justice system. Aboriginal inmates did not reject Christianity as a legitimate system of beliefs, but rather rejected the notion that the penitentiary could stem from a theology based on Jesus Christ. Aboriginal spirituality operated as part of the Aboriginal rejection of western cultural domination. While decolonization is not always a religious activity, the way that Aboriginal peoples in federal prisons accomplished this was distinctly spiritual.

While decolonization occurred because of injustices emanating from the colonial legacy, the therapeutic and rehabilitative value of traditional spirituality motivated the Brotherhoods' activities. James Waldram outlined the practical and therapeutic value of traditional spirituality by exploring the potential for 'symbolic healing' through spiritual rituals.³⁵ Therein lies the great irony of the decolonization by the Native Brotherhood movement in Ontario: Christian clerics, Aboriginal spiritual Elders, and Aboriginal inmates all held parallel objectives. Each group wanted Aboriginal people rehabilitated, to maintain their sobriety, be successfully reintegrated in their home communities, and once released to stay out of prison. Unlike Anglican chaplain J.T.L. James, who wrote that the prison administrators had to first establish the end goals of the correctional process to determine the best way to reach those goals, Aboriginal inmates saw the means just as important as the end because inmates had to relate culturally to their own

rehabilitative practices.³⁶ The strongest advocates of traditional spirituality in prisons were not Aboriginal communities but rather inmates who had experienced the healing power of Aboriginal spirituality. One inmate wrote, “The Indian ways – spiritual and traditional – have to be the number one concern in the Native’s bid for rehabilitation.”³⁷ In many instances the purpose of decolonization was not a blind rejection of the system that failed them, but rather a genuine attempt to rehabilitate when western methods were deemed ineffective. Decolonization was not a total rejection of the criminal justice system, but rather a dissenting voice for reform according to the unique needs of inmates.³⁸ The end goals were not radical in the way that third-world revolutionary movements were, but by asserting their own cultural values within the colonial context, the Brotherhoods made a powerful contribution to the global culture of decolonization. It was through practical goals that concerned inmate rehabilitation that decolonization took place.

Native Brotherhoods rooted their daily operations in celebrating Aboriginal identity. The colonized personality existed when Aboriginal people defined themselves according to Euro-Canadian social norms and expectations. An ongoing theme in inmate publications is that of pride in their own identity as Aboriginal people. The inaugural publication of *The Talking Leaves* began this trend in 1970 when it challenged dominant societies’ perceived attitudes towards Aboriginal inmates. Karen Baulne wrote, “I have chosen the Indian Native Brotherhood as an example to all others that Indians can work together as a group, and contrary to popular belief, can accomplish something for themselves.”³⁹ The Native Sisterhood recognized identity as the most fundamental concern that the group needed to address, stating, “The big important thing is to be recognized as a group and as Native Women.”⁴⁰ The publications of Native Brotherhoods are littered with references to the pride that Aboriginal people had in their identity; the colonized personality was overcome by rejecting the notion that they should be ashamed of their Aboriginal identity. Many Aboriginal people were exposed to the constructive elements of Aboriginal culture for the first time when they were in prison, which redefined their own understanding of Aboriginal identity.

The identity that the Brotherhood movement promoted necessarily diverged from the historical identities adhered to by North American Aboriginal peoples. A new ‘pan-American’ Aboriginal identity began to take form during the 1960s and was relatively firmly established by the 1970s. As the social, economic, and political context changed for Aboriginal peoples, so did their identity. Dr. D’Arcy McNickle wrote, “Today Indians are thinking of themselves not as Cree, Sioux, or Navajo, but as Indians. For the first time we are dealing with an

ethnic group, not a tribal one.”⁴¹ The need for political influence led to the emergence of Canada-wide federations of Aboriginal peoples, creating more unity and organization than ever before.⁴² If the context for Aboriginals outside prison led to an ethnic rather than tribal identity, the situation within Ontario’s prisons emphasized the need to define themselves as ‘Indian’ rather than according to their tribal affiliations. Because of the small size of Ontario’s Aboriginal inmate population, this pan-American identity was necessary for the Brotherhoods to continue operation with any success. With a handful of Aboriginals from all of Canada, the groups were forced to focus on commonality rather than differences among them, and the pan-American culture allowed just that.

There was more at stake than morale in Aboriginal discussions of identity in prisons because Aboriginal peoples saw the loss of identity as a major cause of their overrepresentation in prisons. One supporter identified the key issue facing Aboriginal young people: “They [young people] must adapt to one [world] but they must also remain spiritually in another. Until they learn this, they’ll remain confused.”⁴³ The Native Sons, a group within the Guelph Correctional Institution, addressed the issue by using “heightened spiritual awareness” to combat recidivism amongst Aboriginal inmates.⁴⁴ The Brothers at Millhaven in Bath, Ontario put a fine point on their concerns, stating, “To oppose our Culture development [sic] is to oppose our rehabilitation. So we want all unnecessary Culture repression [sic] to cease.”⁴⁵ Harold Cardinal addressed the issue of Aboriginal identity in a broader context at the House of Bishops Committee on Native Canadians. According to Cardinal, “Basic problems of identity need answering to bring back religious beliefs.”⁴⁶ Native Brotherhoods saw pride in their identity as important in working towards rehabilitation, not because of cultural niceties.

Native Brotherhoods operated within the prison environment with regular activities and events, the most regular activity being weekly meetings. These meetings typically lasted several hours without any formal agenda, though groups had to adapt to the limitations placed on them by the administration.⁴⁷ As often as possible, Brotherhoods would request attendance at meetings from members of the Aboriginal community or for Elders and spiritual leaders to come and teach Aboriginal spirituality to the inmates.⁴⁸ Outside leadership was profoundly significant, though inmates also took on leadership roles through consensus, which was also the traditional mode for election of Elders. One common concern of inmates was that the local community was not aware that they could help inmates, and when local Elders were involved in the prison life this problem

was to some degree remedied. The weekly meetings and publications went hand-in-hand, as the topics covered in both stressed Aboriginal identity and culture, most often rooted in their spiritual beliefs.

The Joyceville Native Brotherhood was particularly successful in promoting Aboriginal culture beyond the confines of the Penitentiary through organizing several "Native Heritage Days." These days were hosted within the prisons but the outside community was also invited to partake. The main goal of these events was to meet other Aboriginal peoples and educate them regarding Aboriginal traditions. They did this by serving traditional Aboriginal foods, dancing, and religious ceremonies. By inviting people to the heritage day, Wilfred Toulouse emphasized the role that Aboriginal spiritual leaders would play.⁴⁹ On May 28, 1977, the Heritage Day featured Bobby Woods, an Elder from the Toronto Chapter of the Allied Indian and Métis Society (AIMS) who led the participants in a Tobacco Ceremony. He explained the spiritual ways as he went along, and taught the participants that "we are relying on spiritual people and elders to find our own identity and our way back to old traditions."⁵⁰ Similar events took place in other clubs, particularly the Native Sisterhood's Pow-Wows that accomplished similar goals. Soon, the Millhaven and Collins Bay institutions followed suit with their own events.

Brotherhoods also promoted Aboriginal culture through the practice of handicrafts. This was a common means through which many Aboriginal peoples across Canada promoted their identities, especially with the rise of neo-traditionalism in the 1970s.⁵¹ The Joyceville Native Brotherhood carved a forty-foot tall totem pole to donate to the city of Kingston in 1973.⁵² The Collins Bay Brotherhood promoted 'Hobby-craft' like beadwork, leatherwork, and silk screening of Christmas cards to sell to other inmates.⁵³ While individual Brotherhoods engaged in unique projects, these types of activities were common in Ontario and across Canada. These programs functioned as a manifestation of the Brotherhoods' pride in their Aboriginal identity.

One of the major achievements of the Native Brotherhoods was gaining official recognition as a self-help group. In 1967, there was no Aboriginal-run programming in federal penitentiaries, and few institutions had any programming specifically for Aboriginal peoples in any capacity.⁵⁴ This speaks to an intriguing trend in the advocacy of Native Brotherhoods because while they critiqued religious underpinnings to the system, they most often compared themselves in their advocacy material to Alcoholics Anonymous rather than to prison chaplains of mainstream denominations. This speaks to the holistic nature of Aboriginal spirituality.⁵⁵ Aboriginal drug and alcohol programs, inmates argued, would be

more effective because they stemmed from Aboriginal peoples own worldviews and culture. Joyceville's Native Brotherhood stated simply that when receiving rehabilitative treatment, the Aboriginal inmate "is treated as any other inmate. However, the Native person is not the same. He thinks different, his life style is different and he is totally different from the non-Native inmate."⁵⁶ In 1973, the Millhaven Native Brotherhood denounced the actions taken by the prison administration as "tokenism," and far from sufficient to address the serious issues facing Aboriginal peoples.⁵⁷ The Brotherhood did not request their own drug and alcohol program from a sense of shame, but rather it was a demand that they control their own recovery. Decolonization was in this instance a means to an end, that end being sobriety. Aboriginal inmates wanted to stay out of prison, and they felt that they could only accomplish that by healing through Aboriginal means. To access the beneficial aspects of Aboriginal culture, they had to decolonize themselves.

While Native Brotherhoods identified themselves as self-help groups early in their history, it was not until February 1975, following a national conference on Native peoples in Canadian criminal justice held in Edmonton, that the group achieved official recognition for the work they did concerning alcohol and drug rehabilitation. However, not all institutions acted on this recognition.⁵⁸ The Edmonton conference brief stated that the purpose of the conference was to "examine the failure of the purpose and concepts of the criminal law of Canada as it relates to the Indian and Native offenders in its application, [underline original]"⁵⁹ and recognizing the value of the drug and alcohol programming already in place was a major recommendation of this conference. The impact of this conference was not immediate; as late as 1976 Robert O'Connor argued, "there are (practically) no rehabilitation programmes [sic] in these places. Unless you rehabilitate yourself, you'll always return."⁶⁰ However, the fact that Aboriginal rights were established in name laid the groundwork for later practical accomplishments of the movement.

When the movement achieved recognition in 1975 as a self-help group it accomplished three pragmatic goals for the movement.⁶¹ First, parole boards were required to recognize involvement in Native Brotherhoods as akin to Alcoholics Anonymous when considering applications for parole. This was an important step towards lowering the lower rates of parole granted to Aboriginal peoples because up to that point the activities of many Aboriginal inmates were considered entirely social without rehabilitative value, and therefore were not considered in applications for parole. Second, the Brotherhoods received funding from the National Alcohol Abuse Program.⁶² While they could not pressure the bureaucracy in the same way that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

would allow, it was an important moment for the movement. Financially compensating Elders who visited the prisons and funding the programs of the Brotherhoods was always a concern, and this funding alleviated that pressure. Third, once drug and alcohol programs were established for Aboriginal peoples in prison, the groups had the framework to advocate for support of Aboriginals. While this did not overcome long-standing institutional and personal prejudice, it was a first step that led to more profound accomplishments that came between the mid-1980s and early 1990s.

While the practical accomplishments that recognition had as a self help group garnered, it was an intangible achievement that was the most meaningful. There is a long history of the criminalization of Aboriginal religious ceremonies, especially those ceremonies that involved the redistribution or destruction of property. While many regulations were not strictly enforced since the 1920s, within the penal context the practice of Aboriginal spiritual ceremonies was, from a practical perspective, outlawed. This was because in the penal context many sacred items were officially labeled contraband. One Elder, responding to the banning of burning sweet grass and sacred tobacco inside the prison left a cigarette burning in an ashtray in the place of these sacred items.⁶³ By recognizing the rehabilitative value of Aboriginal ceremonies, Aboriginal inmates showed the prison administration that their traditions had intrinsic value. The Brotherhood movement always functioned by recognizing the inherent value of Aboriginal identities and tradition, and this core value was officially recognized.

After the Brotherhood movement built a strong foundation within the prison, they began to develop Aboriginal rehabilitative programs outside the prison walls by pressuring for Aboriginal-run and Aboriginal-oriented halfway houses. After an Aboriginal inmate from British Columbia was transferred to Joyceville, AIMS began operating in Ontario and pressured for an Aboriginal-oriented halfway house.⁶⁴ The problem of Aboriginal recidivism was alarming, and rather than releasing inmates to situations that often resulted in further incarceration, the Native Brotherhoods through AIMS explored other options for Aboriginals upon release. Robert O'Connor became an impassioned advocate of an Aboriginal halfway house not because he was angry at western society, but rather because it would "give the despairing inmate something positive to identify with."⁶⁵ O'Connor recognized inherent flaws for all people within the criminal justice system; he argued that while all incarcerated peoples were disadvantaged by the system it was *worse* for Aboriginal peoples. They had little programming and no halfway house to help his people stay out of prison.⁶⁶ AIMS facilitated discussion amongst Ontario's Native Brotherhoods, and by listening to the concerns of inmates deemed it important that upon release the Aboriginal community support inmates. They envisioned a halfway house that was staffed entirely by Aboriginal peoples to whom the inmates could relate.⁶⁷

The Native Brotherhood movement presented a viable alternative to a system of justice that had failed Aboriginal peoples. Native Brotherhoods adapted to their prison environment by expressing their own unique spirituality that affirmed the value of their cultural heritage and assisted them while they served time in federal penitentiaries. Because the Aboriginal worldview was inherently spiritual, everything that Aboriginal inmates did through the Brotherhoods was a fundamentally spiritual activity, be it weekly meetings, spiritual ceremonies, powwows, drug and alcohol programming, or the development of a halfway house. While there were parallels between Aboriginal spirituality and Christianity, Native Brotherhoods rejected certain aspects of Christianity as it was practiced, and used traditional spirituality influenced both by their incarcerated situation and influences from their upbringing to develop the most effective means of healing and renewal of both Aboriginal communities and individual Aboriginal inmates. What was striking about the Brotherhood movement is the clarity through which they saw their own situation as both the product of the political, social, and economic colonization and how articulately they expressed their own colonized status. Further, they intelligently combated their own colonization through practical measures rooted in traditional spirituality. As the movement grew between 1970 and 1982, one of the strongest statements in the global act of decolonization came not from intellectuals or revolutionaries, but rather from incarcerated Aboriginals in Canada.

NOTES

¹ T. Forsyth, "The White Man Cometh." *The Talking Leaves*, 1, (Kingston, ON, Oct. 1971), 9. There are two groups called the "Native Brotherhood." The one I focus on are Aboriginal groups in prisons. There are also political groups of Native peoples that advocate for Native rights, the most famous of these being the British Columbia and Yukon Native Brotherhoods. These two types of groups at times shared similar goals, but their association was incidental.

² "Formation of Native Brotherhood," *The Talking Leaves*, 1, (Kingston, ON, Oct. 1971), 2.

³ Christie Jefferson, *Conquest by Law*. Solicitor General of Canada (APC 8 CA, 1994), 108.

⁴ A Native Sisterhood existed in the Kingston Prison for Women beginning in 1976. For the sake of brevity, the plural 'Brotherhoods' refers to the entire movement, including the Native Sisterhood. Because there was only ever one federal prison for women, there was only one Native Sisterhood, hence my use of the singular.

⁵ James Waldram, *The Way of the Pipe: Aboriginal Spirituality and Symbolic Healing in Canadian Prisons*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 5-14.

⁶ Some especially important works for the Native Brotherhood Movement come from Canadian Aboriginal scholars and Black Power activists in the United States. Further, the movement felt a special bond with incarcerated thinkers both in North America and across the globe, including Nelson Mandela and Leonard Peltier. See: Howard Adams, *Prison of Grass*, (Toronto: New Press, 1975); Harold Cardinal, *The Unjust Society*, (Edmonton: M.G. Hurting, Ltd, 1969); George Jackson, *Soledad Brother* (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc, 1970), 233-250; Huey Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1973), 260-261.

⁷ Joanne Hoople and J.W.E. Newberry. *And What About Canada's Native Peoples?* (C.A.S.N.P., 1976), 12.

⁸ For example, see: Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Trans. Richard Philcox, (New York: Grove Press, 1968).

⁹ Practical application of Christianity is not the same as theology. Often it was the distance between theology and action that was the most problematic in the eyes of Native inmates.

¹⁰ Adams, *Prison of Grass* (Toronto: New Press, 1975), 144.

¹¹ See Ken Coates, "Writing First Nations into Canadian History: A Review of Recent Scholarly Works," *Canadian Historical Review* 81:1 (March 2000): 109. Interactions between Aboriginal peoples and the criminal justice system have been investigated in some depth by Constance Backhouse and Sidney Harring, although the focus has been administrative and political rather than on the cultural impact of incarceration. See: Harring, Sidney. *White Man's Law: Native People in Nineteenth-Century Canadian Jurisprudence*. (Toronto: Osgoode Society, 1998) Constance Backhouse. *Colour-Coded: A Legal History of Racism in Canada, 1900-1950*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999); Owen Carrigan, *Crime and Punishment in Canada: A History*. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1991). Interdisciplinary works studying the role of Native People in prisons include James Waldram, *The Way of the Pipe*, (Toronto: Broadview Press, 1994); Christie Jefferson, *Conquest by Law*. Solicitor General of Canada (APC 8 CA, 1994). ; Deena Rymhs, *From the Iron House: Imprisonment in First Nations Writing*. (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2008) ; James W. St. G. Walker, "Race" Rights and the Law in the Supreme Court of Canada: Historical Case Studies. (Toronto: The Osgoode Society for Canadian Legal History and Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1997); William Schabas, *International Human Rights and Canadian Law: Legal Commitment, Implementation, and the Charter*. 3rd Ed. (Toronto: Thomson Carswell, 2007); Silverman, Robert and Marianne Nielsen. *Aboriginal Peoples and Canadian Criminal Justice*. (Toronto: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1992). Finally, the work of Arthur Solomon, though not a academic source per say however, it is useful, as he was directly involved in establishing the Brotherhood Movement. His works include essays and poetry that effectively illuminate the problems facing Native peoples in Ontario's prisons. See *Eating Bitterness and Songs for the People*.

¹² Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History*. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), 188.

¹³ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Trans. Richard Philcox, (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 1.

¹⁴ The black prison revolutionaries' writings shed considerable light on theoretical concerns of inmates. See: George Jackson, *Soledad Brother* (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc, 1970), 233-250; Huey Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1973), 260-261.

Academic work on prison revolutionaries include: Dan Berger, "We Are the Revolutionaries: Visibility, Protest, and Racial Formation in 1970s Prison Radicalism" PhD diss. Penn State University, 2010; H. Bruce Franklin, *Prison Writing in 20th-Century America* (New York: Penguin Press, 1998); Michael Hames-Garcia, *Fugitive Thought: Prison Movements, Race, and the Meaning of Justice* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004); Barbara Harlow, *Barred: Women, Writing, and Political Detention* (Hanover, NH: University of New

Hampshire Press, 1992); Joy James, ed., *Imprisoned Intellectuals: America's Political Prisoners Write on Life, Liberation, and Rebellion* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003); Joy James, ed., *The New Abolitionists: (Neo)Slave Narratives and Contemporary Prison Writings* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2005); Dylan Rodríguez, *Forced Passages: Imprisoned Radical Intellectuals and the U.S. Prison Regime* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006); Lee Bernstein, *America is the Prison: Arts and Politics in Prison in the 1970s*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010.

¹⁵ Malcolm X as told to Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, (New York: Ballantine Books, 1973), 172-194; Arthur Solomon, *Eating Bitterness: A Vision Beyond the Prison Walls*, (Toronto: NC Press Ltd., 1994), xi; Robert O'Connor, Letter to the Carleton Conference, October 21st, 1976, Trent Archives, 82-014/44/22; Waldram, *The Way of the Pipe*, 28-32.

¹⁶ Bob Lebeuf, "Held," *The Talking Leaves*, Vol. 2, Feb. 1972, 5.

¹⁷ Gabriella Goliger, "Inmates," Trent University Archives, 82-014/44/12.; Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 249.

¹⁸ Report to Members of Criminal Justice Commission, Eleanor McDonald, Oct. 20, 1991. Anglican Archives, GS 592-28.

¹⁹ For literature on the religious and philosophical origins of the prison, see: Norval Morris and David Rothman. *The Oxford History of the Prison: The Practice of Punishment in Western Society*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995. ; Peter Oliver, "Terror to Evil-Doers": *Prisons and Punishments in Nineteenth-Century Ontario*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998. ; Michael Ignatieff, *A Just Measure of Pain: The Penitentiary and the Industrial Revolution, 1750-1850*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.

²⁰ Birchbark Time Native Brotherhood, Trent University Archives, CASNP Fonds, Acc. No. 82-014/44/12.

²¹ Robert O'Connor, Letter to the Carleton Conference, October 21st, 1976, Trent Archives, 82-014/44/22.

²² Michael Hames-Garcia, *Fugitive Thought: Prison Movements, Race, and the Meaning of Justice*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), xlii.

²³ Berger, xvii.

²⁴ Christie Jefferson, 109.

²⁵ Al Sinobert, "The Long and Bitter Trail," *Tribal Ways* (Birchbark Times Native Brotherhood: 1972), 1.

²⁶ Denna Rymhs, *From the Iron House: Imprisonment in First Nations Writing*, (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2008), 67-68; Robert Gaucher, "Canadian Penal Press: A Documentation and Analysis." *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons* vol. 2 no. 1 (1989), 3; Arthur Solomon, *Eating Bitterness: A Vision Beyond the Prison Walls (Poems and Essays of Art Solomon)*. Edited by Cathleen

Kneen and Michael Posluns. (Toronto: NC Press Ltd, 1994).

²⁷ Anonymous, "Heritage Day," *Native Sisterhood Newsletter*, (August 1977), 8.

²⁸ Solomon, 80-84.

²⁹ Solomon, 91. This was a theme in much of the communication and works by inmates, but Solomon stated the position most eloquently.

³⁰ Native peoples were not alone in arguing against use of religion as a colonial tool. The Anglican Church's 1969 Hendry report argued that it would be against the nature of Christianity to act in a colonial capacity. The Anglican position was that "the church is not some extraneous arm of the white world charged with the task of doing anything to or for the Indians – rather the Church is Indian, just as it is White." Charles Hendry, *Beyond Traplines: Does the Church Really Care?* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1969), 55.

³¹ See: Susan Neylan, *The Heavens are Changing: Nineteenth-Century Protestant Missions and the Tsimshian Christianity*. (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2003); Miller, *Skyscrapers Hide the Heavens: A History of Indian-White Relations in Canada*, 3rd Ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000).

³² Vine Deloria, *God is Red: A Native View of Religion*, 2nd Ed. (Golden: Fulcrum Publishing, 1994), 185.

³³ Deloria, 194.

³⁴ Nancy Christie and Michael Gauvreau. *Christian Churches and their Peoples, 1840-1965: A Social History of Religion in Canada*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 145.

³⁵ Waldram, 32-41.

³⁶ JTL James, "Philosophy, Theology, and the Correctional Process," May 5, 1972, Anglican Archives GS 76-106.

³⁷ Canadian Association in Support of the Native Peoples. *Bulletin*, 16, No. 3 (Ottawa, CASNP, 1975), 2.

³⁸ CASNP Bulletin, 2. Native Brotherhoods were aware that they needed to temper their expectations of change, so rather than aim at unrealistic goals they pressured for realistic goals, many of which were accomplished in the 1980s and 1990s.

³⁹ Karen Baulne, "My Dream", *Talking Leaves*, Vol. 1, (Oct. 1971), 5.

⁴⁰ Lana Aubichon, "What Is It? What Is It?" *Native Sisterhood*, (Aug. 1977), 3.

⁴¹ Bulletin, Indian Eskimo Association of Canada. Vol. 7 no. 6 (Dec. 1966).

⁴² Ben Swankey, *National Identity or Cultural Genocide?* (Toronto: Progress Books, 1970), 6.

⁴³ Sagayewatha Manitowabi, n.d., Trent University Archives, 82-014/44/23.

⁴⁴ Personal Correspondence, Tona Mason to Joanne Hoople, Oct. 18, 1976. Trent University Archives, 82-014/44/23.

- ⁴⁵ Native Brotherhood of Millhaven (copy of brief), June, 1973. Trent University Archives, 82-014/29/34.
- ⁴⁶ Cardinal, Dec. 15-17, 1970, Anglican Archives, GS 75-14, Box 1 Folder 3.
- ⁴⁷ Anonymous, "Formation of the Native Brotherhood," *The Talking Leaves*, Vol. 1 (October 1971), 2.
- ⁴⁸ Personal Correspondence, Trent University Archives, CASNP, 82-014 Box 44.
- ⁴⁹ Correspondence, Wilfred Toulouse to Gordon Lee, April 30, 1976. Trent University Archives, 82-014/29/27.
- ⁵⁰ "Heritage Day," *Native Sisterhood*, August 1977, page 8.
- ⁵¹ Anna Willow, *Strong Hearts, Native Lands*. (Albany: SUNY Press, 2012).
- ⁵² CASNP Bulletin, 7.
- ⁵³ Richard Whythe, "As I See It....." *Tribal Ways*, Collins Bay Native Brotherhood, (Feb. 1974), 5.
- ⁵⁴ Christie Jefferson, *Conquest by Law*. Solicitor General of Canada (APC 8 CA, 1994), 48.
- ⁵⁵ Cree theologian Ray Aldred argued that Native notions of spirituality can not be compared to that of Christian belief because European spiritual beliefs are largely dualistic. While there is a European divide between the sacred and the secular, that binary is false in Native eyes. Ray Aldred, "Freedom: A Cree Theologian's Account," at *A Dialogue on the Role of Religion and Spirituality in the Aboriginal Worldview*, Waterloo Lutheran Seminary, November 12, 2012.
- ⁵⁶ "Problems facing Native Inmates", Nov. 26, 1976. Trent University Archives, 82-014/41/8.
- ⁵⁷ "Native Brotherhood of Millhaven," June 1973, Trent University Archives, 82-014/29/34.
- ⁵⁸ *Report: Native Inmate Assistance Fund*, March 1, 1975, Trent University archives, 82-014/29/30.
- ⁵⁹ Conference Brief, *Indians and the Criminal Justice System*, (Feb. 3-5, 1975), 1.
- ⁶⁰ Letter from Mr. Robert O'Connor of Joyceville Penitentiary to the Symposium on Natives and the Criminal Justice System, held at Carleton University on October 12st, 1976. Trent Archives, 82-014/44/22. The word "practically" was inserted by hand on the typed letter. Likely this is because O'Connor realized that official programs did exist, but that the tokenism of Millhaven existed in Joyceville as well.
- ⁶¹ Jefferson, 111.
- ⁶² Brotherhoods and Activities, n.d., Trent University Archives, 82-014/44/22.
- ⁶³ Art Solomon, *Songs for the People*, (Toronto: NC Press, 1990), 106.
- ⁶⁴ Jefferson, 113.

⁶⁵ Gabriella Goliger "Inmates," Trent University Archives, 82-014/44/12. This is not to suggest that he was not angry with the system, but rather that if he was angry, that was not the motivating factor in O'Connor's involvement with the Brotherhoods or his advocacy for a Native halfway house.

⁶⁶ Robert O'Connor, "Letter to Symposium," Oct. 21, 1976. Trent University Archives, 82-014/44/22.

⁶⁷ Canadian Association in Support of the Native Peoples. *Bulletin*, 16, No. 3 (Ottawa, CASNP, 1975), 7.