

REPORT ON NATIVE AMERICAN TREK

This is a brief report on an almost 10,000 mile trip to nine states covering 58 days visiting 49 possible sites on 23 reservations among 26 tribes for a Native Human Development

Project that we want to do this year. It has been an exciting fifty days. First of all, I'll move through the journey we were on, then come back and lift out the signal places that we encountered, then reflect on some priorities and values that need to be kept in mind as we get into this, and then finally respond-to some questions on Your part as you have thought about this.

We set out on a journey to do several things. We wanted to check out the intuitions of Area San Francisco in the first instance. They had done research last spring, had already visited 106 communities in almost every region and state in their area, and had produced a sixteen page document. They had prioritized all these communities and named the six most likely ones for social demonstration. So we were not beginning from scratch. We wanted to see those six, and we also wanted to check out some places that they had not been to. We wanted to check to see if they were impacting any of the old networks there that I used to know ten years ago when I worked with Indians. We wanted to get the feel, the grasp, the milieu, to get into that culture again. We wanted to find out where we could best put our foot down and after having set our foot down, have the best possibility for replication across North America. In the first instance we are not interested in doing an Indian village or an Indian reservation-they happen to be eighty-five reservations in this country, and probably more than 350 villages. We are interested in doing all of them. And we are not interested in a few Indian families -- we are interested in a million and a half Native Americans who need to be given a hand to get their gifts out into history. It means a lot where you initially put your foot down.

One of the assumptions as we started out was that we would take a look first at Area San Francisco. That was not only because they had done their homework, but as you look at this Bureau of Indian Affairs map of North America, the yellow indicates where the Indian population is. Well over two-thirds of the native population of North America-lies in Area San Francisco. A majority of the reservations and also the largest ones are there. It is logical to assume that we would begin there. Secondly, it makes sense that we should keep to our global model in terms of spreading our Social Demonstrations around the world between each of the time zones. At this point, we have nothing between 5th City and Majuro. That is a long way, and you do not get it by going over to Maine. And then, too, you have to bear in mind that if you are going to address the deep contradiction within the American consciousness, you have to do that in terms of the images that the American people have of the Native Americans. When you say "Indian" most American people do not see someone making a pot. They see someone riding over a hill with a bow and arrow and a war bonnet. That is because we have been continually brainwashed through the movies and through TV with images of the Plains Indians. That is neither here nor there, but that is just the way it is. If we could do something with the Plains Indians, we might be able to address the contradiction across the country. Although we wanted to take the whole Area and look at it, that delimited the territory as something east of the Rockies, west of the Mississippi, south of Canada, and north of Denver. So if you took that chunk, you had a ballpark. There are about fifteen Plains Indian tribes in there, and if you did something with one of them, you would somehow have a catalytic effect on the whole.

We started in our old home turf. I had not been back for eight years among the Blackfeet people. That was just to check our contacts there. We were able to visit four sites and I think we probably would not do anything there because there are too many old footprints all around the place. There is a fantastic preschool that uses the 5th City curriculum, and there is an old cadre, and there are old marks all over the place. So we wished them well and went on.

The northern Cheyenne is a small reservation, a very needy reservation, with just a few towns, and that would be a fine location for a wedge if you were going to attack this whole thing downwards and let the impact of it go both ways. The Cheyenne, have always been a very proud people, and that name "Cheyenne" is a very Indian

sounding name. One of their towns is named "Long Deer," which would sound good in the Social Demonstration song.

Then when we went down into Wyoming we checked out the Wind River Reservation where you have a combination of the Shoshonee and the Arrapahoe people. They were bitter enemies -- they always cut one another's throats, so our government put them together on the same reservation a hundred years ago, and they have fought it out ever since. There are several little villages there. One little village called "Arapaho" would-be interesting to do something with, but it is not very large, perhaps about 120 people. We did not spend much time there. We moved right on down and touched a couple of places in New Mexico just to check out the Southwest, knowing we had gotten out of Plains country, but wanting to know what the networks were. We stopped on the Acoma Reservation, out of Albuquerque, then went over to the Mescalero Apache, and both of those people seem to be doing quite well, particularly the Apache. They have mobilized their economic resources and have put in a ski resort and motels -- they are really going great guns. Their annual income as families was probably quite high.

Then over in Arizona, we checked out more of the Southwest by looking at the Papago people. We had some contacts from our work in Phoenix a few years ago. One of those situations is four little villages set in a kind of diamond shape, one of which has a medical facility, one of which has a school, one of which has new housing, and the other of which has nothing. If you put those four together into a kind of diamond and hooked them all together as one demonstration, it would be quite a site. The impact would be primarily on the Southwest, however, and down into Mexico, since the relationships of this tribe go south rather than north.

Then we had an exciting time with the Apache. We were out in the Geronimo and the Cochise country, the San Carlos Apache Reservation. We looked at several places, and we were more suspect and felt more of a sense of unwelcome among the Apache than anywhere else, maybe with the exception of the Hopis and the Pineridge Sioux. But those Apache villages -- if we could get in, it would be something! Is there any other Indian name that strikes more terror in the heart? If you did something with that, you would have a powerful sign to use in terms of pronouncing absolution on this nation. There are a couple of places there -- one little village called Cibecue that we fell in love with, and I could have stayed. It lies out at the end of a road, at the end of a canyon, very nicely situated in terms of being geographically delimited and isolated and cut off from the rest of the world. It is a fine place to do a Social Demonstration. You would almost need a helicopter to get in but other than that it would be a great place to be.

And then we fell in love with the Hopi people. We visited five villages on the three mesas of the Hopi reservation. If you have ever been in Hopi land you know what I mean. There is something deeply mysterious about that country. The oldest continuously inhabited village in the United States is on the third mesa. It is a village that is well over 5,000 years old and is just going on being there. Those rock houses are built up out of the cliffs and are just there. You can not go into that village, however; they have a big sign out on the road where you turn in saying something like "the white man has continuously broken our laws, and in fact has' broken most of his own. Therefore he is not welcome in this village." So I am afraid we could not do anything in that one. But there are other ancient Hopi villages that we spotted. This is by far the most primitive situation of any that we saw. It is like going to Oombulgurri again, except that there are TV antennas sticking out of those 5,000 year old houses. It really blows your mind, the kind of transition they are in. But you realize that by doing the Hopi you would not only be doing that nation, you would be doing the Navaho. They sit right in the middle of the Navaho nation, which is 180,000 Navahos, and the Navahos copy everything the Hopis do. So if you could get your foot down in Hopi land, you would also be putting it in Navaho country all across that land. We have problems with language, getting in, getting entre, getting permission and everything else: there are many blocks, but, my, what a sign that would be!

We were on our way to Area Council in San Francisco so we checked out the Piute people up in northern Arizona. They are doing very well, with some ranching and farming and irrigation. We circled around through Nevada and visited three locations, again among Piute. They are very acculturated in terms of having adapted to the 20th century. They are making great progress in terms of their whole reservation life. We did not see among the Piute the kind of obvious innocent suffering that we saw at other places. Over in Utah, toward Salt Lake City, we visited the Ouray Reservation where the Utes are. There again, they seem to be doing fairly well. That is almost a mountain tribe along with Fort Hall above Salt Lake City where we visited the Bannock Indians. These are mountain tribes. I am not sure how much they relate to either the Plains Indians or the Southwest however the Ute relate to the Piute and the Shoshone in Wyoming. We wanted to check those on our way back to Montana.

At the Area Council we had the help of a task force to go over everything we had seen, to help us debrief, to push back, to help us refine it and to come up with eight possible sites. There are four in Montana and four in Arizona: the Rocky Boy; the Chippewa-Cree; then Hays, which is Assiniboin; Lodgegrass, which is Crow; Busbee, which is Cheyenne; Anegam, which is Papago; Lylas, which is Apache; Cibecue, which is Apache; and Shongoyovi, which is Hopi.

With those eight we then went back to the drawing board and began to work in depth in Montana. We made another circuit out of there over into North and South Dakota, going back to these locations several times. I will say one word about the American Indian Movement, and the Red Power Movement in North and South Dakota. At this point we wanted to protect our flanks; we do not want to get killed early in the game. And any Social Demonstration wants to be sure that it does not get blown all to pieces by a bunch of radicals who happen to be carrying guns. But we did want to check out the Pineridge Reservation and Wounded Knee, to go to those places and talk to a few people. If there are any white people left, we wanted to find them and see why they were still around. We did that and found some great people. We found a way to grasp what is the symbolic and the actual leadership of the Indian Movement, where it is located, where its power is in North and South Dakota, which groups are more volatile than others, and what to listen for and who to stay out of the way of.

We visited the Rosebud Reservation, the Oglala Sioux, and then up to Eagle Butte, the Cheyenne River Sioux, and then the Standing Rock Sioux in North Dakota near Fort Yates. Standing Rock Sioux are probably the least militant of the Seven Nations or the Seven Council Fires of the Sioux people. We had a consultation there with the Standing Rock Sioux last January and we have some friends there. Through their entree, we found a little village there, and need to go look again. There is a little community called "Cannonball," that is on the very tip of the Standing Rock Sioux reservation in the north, about 40 miles south of Bismark. And it is the worst place that we saw out of the forty-nine that we looked at. In terms of services, there is absolutely nothing. There is no way to get groceries, there is no way to get gas, there are no structures in the community whatsoever except for a school that looks like it is in very poor shape, there is 90% alcoholism, 90% unemployment, and 400 people who are actually living on the very edge of extinction. They put up some new houses for them about six or eight years ago, and they are falling to the ground. Broken glass and cars are all over the place, fences knocked down, kids wandering on the street, half of them not in school -- it is a mess. I felt more like vomiting in that community than in any of the others that I visited. And I was told before I went on the trip that it is a good sign when you feel like vomiting. You know you are close to something. So that happened after the San Francisco Council and they chose these eight, and I kept poking around and came up with Cannonball.

Cannonball would not be a bad name in our song, now would it? That would be entree to the Sioux, and there are seven nations, seven Council Fires within the Sioux nation. And talk about a Plains Indian, there you have it! The Sioux are the king of the plains, and central to the history of our nation. Chief Sitting Bull, Custer's last Stand, the whole show in all the movies you see, the Sioux are at it again. But that is the only way we can get into the Sioux nation directly. I think it is at this point that we must avoid trouble with Red Power. We would have to enter through the top, through Fort Peck, or come at them through the Assiniboins who are their first cousins and who speak basically the same language.

Now I will go back and say some more about that Rocky Boy situation in Montana. That was a dumb name some rancher gave a great man many years ago. His name was Heavy Heart, and how it ever got shortened to Rocky Boy -- that is just another example of the slap in the face of those people. It is a new reservation as reservations go -- 1917 it came into being. It was created for a band of wandering Cree who had been all over Montana and Canada and had not yet found a place to live. It is one of two reservations in North America, the other being the Navaho, in which the land has not been allocated to individual tribal members. This happened on every other reservation, so that you had a hundred years of fighting about what land belonged to whom, and somebody died and it was divided up, and finally by this point somebody owns forty acres of sagebrush. It is our individualism that destroyed the red man's concept of the land and also his corporateness as a people. But in the instance of the Navaho and the Rocky Boy, interestingly enough, the reservation was never allocated, and deeded to individual tribal members. The entire reservation, 178,000 acres, is owned and operated by the tribe. The people live all over it. It is not a village. The nearest thing to a village there is the tribal conference center and a service station and the school.

If we were to do the Rocky Boy, we would be doing something we have never done before. It is not even like Oombulgurri where you have vast territory to cover, but at least you have a village. If you did Rocky Boy, you would be doing something like this: everybody that lived on a particular stream, or up a valley, would be stake 1. Everybody who lived up on the flat plain up north would be stake 2. And your stakes would be 20 miles wide and 60 miles long, and transportation would be a problem. You would need Honda bikes and snowmobiles. But it would be exciting. The Cree people became Plains Indians by decision. They migrated from the East. They brought their language with them. It is a written language. They are the only people among the Plains people who have a written language. This language is still very much alive; they teach bi-lingually in their schools and write their language. That Cree language is known by Crees everywhere. And the Chippewa-crees are related to the Chippewas in Oklahoma as well. Interestingly enough, they are a direct divide, a band split off of the tribe that was located just 40 miles south of Edmonton, another Cree tribe, and they go back and forth in Canada. They have other Cree relations all over Canada as far up as the northern shore of Great Slave Lake, among the Dog Rib people. They speak that same language, they have inter-family ties that extend back and forth across the border, back to the Great Lakes and down to Oklahoma, they have intermarried with almost every tribe in existence, and it is a network of people that would be very interesting to work with. Wouldn't it be exciting to have a ChippewaCree social demonstration document to show somebody, published in their own language? I hate to get into translation again, but what a powerful tool that would be, especially if you showed it to some other Cree reservations, of which there are many. In Canada there are hundreds of Cree villages which are not on any reservation, they are just squatted there. Lynn, incidentally, is teaching in one of those little Cree villages, called Loon Lake, in Northern Alberta. There are 400 people who speak the same language as these people on Rocky Boy, who are out in the country of Northern Alberta. So Rocky Boy is coming up fairly red for me these days, knowing full well that it involves helicopters and snowmobiles and bikes and so forth. But I have not gotten my head around wanting to do that yet. It is too unmanageable.

Then there is Hayes on the Assiniboin Reservation about 60 miles east of Rocky Boy. They are very close. In between is Chief Joseph's battlefield where Chief Joseph was finally intercepted and brought back to the reservation. Two gentlemen from this Assiniboin reservation went on the China trip back in January with Chuck Newbreast from Browning. Some of you may remember that Charles Newbreast along with several other people from across the country went on a Kellogg Foundation six week trip to China. That fairly blew their minds. The corporateness that was there, with People's Palaces and so forth, these two guys came back to the Assiniboin reservation, and they have just been raising hell. The tribal council and everybody else was saying "We've got to get this place shaped up. We have to have things like rites and rituals and schools and People's Palaces and..." And then we come along and showed them what we are doing. That is the same thing, you know. We talked to the chief of the tribe and the tribal manager, both of whom went on the trip, and they are very excited about the possibility of working with us. They would be delighted to meet with us further. We dangled the bait in front of them and they are ready to bite.

Then there is another place. (I have been told it would be helpful to have at least three). I will say something first about the Crow reservation. Probably Lodgegrass would be the easiest and most logical of the five villages to do. We do have entree on the Crow reservation. We have a Town Meeting grad there who is an Indian and is now an organizer and coordinator for Town Meetings at Crow Agencies. Incidentally he is the nephew of the chief on the Rocky Boy reservation. He has gone home and told his uncle what great people we are, and so Town Meeting has won again. We could come in on the shirrtails of Town Meeting and find the leadership that is raised up and develop it and push it through. We talked to some of the tribal leaders. They have one fine elderly gentleman who has his PhD. in anthropology, John Medicine Crow, who is a great, great man and who understands what we are about. I think he would like to see us come, and he is a very powerful symbolic figure among his people. I think they would go anywhere he said go. And he is 100% behind us with the Town Meeting coming up. For those reasons, because Sam Windyboy is so vocal about us to his uncle the chief, because we have two guys from China on the Fort Belnap reservation, and because we already have a beginning with the Crow, I would say you could begin with strength in one of those three places. But don't forget Cannonball in North Dakota. I think we have to look at that again, knowing that we do not have the kind of entree that we have in these other places. I think that now is the time for several to get together, and go back and spend a day or so looking, brooding, talking to people, meeting with the tribal leadership, finding the angel, as someone calls it, finding the ones that can make it move, and then decide. I think we could not go wrong with any one of those, nor could we so wrong with some of the others I have named. It is almost like we need to woo them all.

At this point I think we would be dumb to name the one. Let's let them name themselves over the period of the next few months as they have Town Meetings, as they meet with some of us, as they give their nod. Meanwhile, I think we need to go into these at least in Montana and continue to work to do the local framing, to begin to do the regional framing, and get our fingers on where the pulse is in that whole area and what the networks are. I have a dream that sometime in the next few weeks some Guardian in North America will loan us a camper trailer. I am sure that all the vacations are over and that somewhere there is a camper trailer parked behind a Guardian's house, and it won't be used until next July. It is too early to go onto a reservation. If we went onto one we would commit ourselves in such a way that we could not get out of it. Let's stay off, but let's stay near enough so that we can do daily, weekly, or nightly stirring up that network. I would like to park one trailer right between the Rocky Boy and Fort Belnap Assinoboin reservations.

One day you would go one way and the next day you would go the other. The Billings House is already working every week on the Crow Reservation with the coordinating committee for the Town Meeting. I think that when they have had a Town Meeting, we will get our leadership and they will name themselves. By December we should move onto that reservation and be ready for the Consult in March.

Everybody keeps asking me about a Consult in January, but I think not. Not that we should not do it, it is just that in a place like Montana, snowshoes, snowmobiles and shovels, chains, blizzard gear, gloves, transportation systems, keeping your water from freezing, all of those picky little extras would have to be overcome in January. We could in-kind about 40 snowmobiles in order to visit the village, in-kind 4-wheel jeeps in order to get into town for groceries and back, but there are problems with that. In Cibecue in Arizona, January would be -treat, but not Montana. I think by March the weather will have broken, the crocus will begin to bloom, people will come out of hibernation, and it will be time to do a consult.

Question: Is the Rocky Boy land situation really atypical?

Yes, but every reservation that has its head on straight is moving in that direction. They are getting their tribal land together and beginning to round it up and own it corporately because they see that is the only way that they can survive. If they saw a sign that it can happen, it would be a great help in replication.

Question: What government agencies are present at these sites? Of course, the Bureau of Indian Affairs is there in all of them., the Department of Interior is there, the Department of Agriculture is there, the Bureau of Public Health Services is there, there are about 50 agencies present.

Question: What would it take to get authorization in Cannonball? It would take another trip. We need to go with an Anglican minister who is Indian, a Sioux and have him introduce us to his people.

Question: Do you know one? Yes

Question: Do you have any intuitions about what BIA will do? They are going to be very defensive about anything we do because they are in the death throes wondering what they are about. Our image of what will happen there is to get our local situation nailed-down, get our regional situation nailed down and our national advocacy nailed down, and then the bureau chief in Washington D.C. Senator Harris will then call his bureau chief and bureau chief will call Mr. BIA man on the reservation and say "Hey, there are these fine people called the Institute of Cultural Affairs working on this reservation. We suggest you cooperate with them and do everything you can to be of help" and then hang up. And then we go in and see them, not before. I have been close enough to them in the past to know they are great people, but they are very, very bureaucratic and extremely defensive, and there are about 220 of them on every reservation. You have to be very careful.

Question: Are they not one of the new bureaucracies? They are also part of They are a branch of the Department. We have advocacy through Majuro with the Department of Interior to go directly to the superintendent of the reservation. You do not need to mess with some small fellow who is running a land irrigation program or whatever.

Question: What is your vision, how would you know a Human Development Project had happened in one of these places? In anything having to do with Native Americans, a demonstration will be something having to do with the land and its use. That is going to take various forms, either agricultural or livestock. It is also going to

have to do primarily with the recovery of their ancient story and their symbols which they desperately need. That is the thing they get most excited about with us. It is going to have to do with self-employment. They have been on the dole, on the handout, for over a hundred years. They still come and pick up the weekly commodities at the agencies. You have a people who for the first time in their lives are dependent again upon their own creativity. In terms of business, stores that they run have to be key to each one of these reservations. They must do not have stores where they can buy things. There is some white trader who has come in and ripped them off. Prices are 10 times what they ought to be because it is 40 miles to town. And gasoline is a dollar a gallon, because they know they have to get to town. It is that kind of thing you would see changed when they begin to handle their own stores, transportation, land, their ranching, farming and their irrigation. Their schools, I think, would be bilingual, recovering their language, their symbols, their songs, and their annual celebrations. Their ancient ceremonies would be recovered

Question: What effect would you see this HDP having on those Native Americans in the cities? I think they will all return.

The government has tried ways to relocate them in the cities and they always come back, at least to visit. People come back every six months or so. It is still home for them. If we could ever get anything going that would be a reason not to leave, then we would have them.

This is one closing word about the profound function of this. Every night I wake up in a cold chill just beginning to grasp what in the world we are doing. This nation is carrying in its deeps a profound scar that cannot and will not go away. This nation fights bitterly against being forgiven the sin of having extinguished close to six million people over a two hundred year period, and allowed them to degenerate to this point. What we are about is a wedge of absolution that is to be shoved into the American consciousness that will allow this nation to say yes to who it has been and who it is becoming. The frightening part and the part that keeps me awake at night is the unbelievable snakepit of pitfalls and traps and bureaucratic red tape and Indian bureaucracy and government bureaucracy and private bureaucracy, infighting and family fighting, and ranchers against the Indians and Indians against ranchers and community strike and the most fractured, broken, debilitated people that exist on the North American continent. And we presume that we have the tools, we have the gifts, we have the skills, we have the determination to say a mighty NO to that. That scares me. This is the one assignment that I would never have asked for. It is the one thing that scares me more than I have ever been scared in my life. If you want to be on this social demonstration team, then you do not understand what is going on. If you wake up sweating over it and almost wet your bed in fear that you might get assigned to it, then you are on the right track.