

Al Ortiz tells audience Indians need more heroes

New heroes are needed for Native American people, Indian scholar Al Ortiz told an audience of about 100 people recently at the University of Minnesota.

"This country has honored too long the war chiefs," said Ortiz, a member of the Tewa Pueblo at San Juan, N.M., and a professor of anthropology at the University of New Mexico.

"There is also a tradition of peace chiefs and of Indian people who have co-existed and survived with dignity in American society," he said in his American Indian Week presentation sponsored by the

American Indian studies department.

Ortiz cited the examples of such people as Dr. Carlos Montezuma, an Apache who had a successful career as a Chicago, Ill., physician, but in his later years returned to work with his own people, and Dr. Charles Eastman, a Sioux, who was both a physician and author of books such as "Indian Boyhood" and preserved his "Indian soul" by spending three months of each year in a remote cabin in the Ontario woods.

"When it mattered, both chose to reaffirm that they were

Indians," Ortiz said, adding, "There is no good biography of either man."

Ishi, "the last wild Indian or the last civilized man in America," and Ortiz' own Tewa grandmother were also cited as Native people who survived with dignity in a white man's world.

"Ishi was a monument to the Indian will to endure," he said. "My grandmother taught me that if I couldn't explain what I was doing (as a student and a professor) in the Tewa language it probably wasn't worth doing."

In pointing to the commonality of white men and Native Americans, Ortiz quoted philosophers from both cultures.

"When we seek to boil down underlying, connecting truths about what it means to be human, we see that they are saying the same thing," said Ortiz.

"If we can have a convergence of belief and knowledge, everything else is lesser."

"Dispossession and genocide have been justified on the 'us versus them' theory," Prof. Ortiz concluded.