

Difference and Indifference

Differences and indifferences are two of the greatest dangers from within to native land interests.

In past history, differences among Indian tribes have been almost as destructive to their survival as the U.S. Cavalry. American Indians of the lower 48 often could have saved their lands had they but united their forces. Instead they allowed petty personality rivalries, economic competition and long standing tribal animosities to divide them. The men who desire our lands have learned from history. They will no longer drive us from our homes at gunpoint, but they surely might attempt to divide and weaken us by fanning whatever sparks of differences they can find.

Many of our elected government officials are honestly confused about who our true spokesman are. If we do not designate leaders clearly and strongly, the government might make their own decision, choosing whoever comes closest to what they want to hear. Many tragic treaties of the past were signed in the name of the Indian by men who gained personally by turning against their fellow natives.

We too can learn from history if we do not allow the second danger, indifference, to overcome us. We must take active interest in electing officials of the native organizations that represent us. We must not leave the the job to others or we will find words spoken in our names that are far from what we truly desire. We never have had a more urgent need than now for our most articulate, intelligent and responsible people to come forward. But they may not come forward unless they are assured that they will not have to fight alone.