UCLA
American Indian Culture and Research Journal

Title
Tinseltown Tyee: Nipo Strongheart and the Making of Braveheart

Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/4v92s2cb

Journal
American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 42(3)

ISSN
0161-6463

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Publication Date
2018-06-01

DOI
10.17953/aicrj.42.3.fisher

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DOI 10.17953/aicrj.42.3.fisher

Tinseltown Tyee: Nipo Strongheart and the Making of *Braveheart*

Andrew H. Fisher

On December 28, 1925, the Cecil B. DeMille production of *Braveheart* premiered at the State Theater in Long Beach, California. It must have been a heady occasion for the film's technical adviser, Nipo Strongheart, who was on hand to promote the picture and place the story in historical context. He had been responsible for bringing an air of authenticity to the DeMille studio's screen adaptation of *Strongheart*, originally a stage play by William DeMille that had already been made into a film in 1914, also titled *Strongheart*.[1] Unlike most Indian melodramas of the Silent Era, *Braveheart* ends with a Native victory that secures the rights of the hero's tribe and signals their survival as a distinct culture in the modern world. That crucial difference, among others, was the result of Strongheart's effort to shape the narrative and use the movie industry for the advancement of Indian welfare.[2]

Most of Strongheart's work had been behind the scenes and overshadowed by others involved, who often took his advice but also a lion's share of the credit. Now, as the "real" Strongheart stared out at a sea of white faces in the State Theater's cavernous auditorium, he had a chance to speak directly for the people represented in the movie. Now, using the skills he had honed on the professional lecture circuit, he could teach the important lessons of DeMille's "Epical Indian Photoplay" to make it more meaningful than the "Picturesque Dramatic Story of Primitive Passion" promised by the studio's publicity.[3] He could make the movie matter in the real world, for the sake of those back home on the Yakama reservation in south-central Washington state.[4]

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Figure 1. *Slide advertising Nipo Strongheart's appearance at the Rampart Theatre in Los Angeles, 1926. Image courtesy of Autry Museum, Los Angeles.*

And it just might make him rich and famous. The future seemed bright if films like *Braveheart* sold tickets and stirred the public to action. At age thirty-four, Strongheart stood on the cusp of a new career in a new medium, one with untold potential to move mass audiences and earn him a good living.

Strongheart's moment in the spotlight came at a fortuitous time in the history of American Indian representation. As Philip Deloria has suggested, the early decades of the twentieth century presented a brief window of opportunity to Native performers engaged in the making and unmaking of societal expectations for Indian people.[5] With the Indian Wars receding into the past and the federal government promoting assimilation, playwrights and filmmakers began to experiment with different narratives about Native Americans. Although old tropes of primitivism and savagery still dominated cinema, some productions "tried to do what the Wild West shows had refused to do: think about Indians and social relations in the contemporary world. Filmmakers sent imagined Indians off to Harvard and to Carlisle for educations and then brought them back to reservations to see what would happen."[6] The original stage and screen versions of *Strongheart* exemplified this theme of the educated Indian torn between civilized society and tribal ways, between love for a white woman and obligations to his own people. Cecil B. DeMille's *Braveheart* kept that basic storyline but changed the setting and subplot in ways that reveal the influence of the film's Native technical adviser.

Strongheart's role in the making of *Braveheart* allows us to see the Native performers of his generation as actors in multiple senses of the word, rather than merely as objects of the cinematic gaze. Moving beyond studies that emphasize the dominant society's construction of stereotypes and consumption of Indianness, scholars such as Kiara Vigil and Linda Scarangella McNenly have started to investigate how Native people themselves disrupted the dominant discourse and negotiated the terms of representation. Like other "contact zones" where Indigenous intellectuals and performers engaged with non-Indigenous audiences and expectations, the movie industry presents "a site for the investigation of agency and of the negotiation of social meanings and representations of Native identity."[7] Strongheart was only one of many Indian entertainers who entered this arena during the early twentieth century, determined to advance their own careers but often equally committed to flipping the script on white society. During the Silent Era, Hollywood was virtually overrun with celluloid chiefs, generally sporting colorful names and identities of sometimes dubious authenticity. This royal menagerie included performers known as Chief Big Bear, Chief Black Hawk, Chief Blue Eagle, Chief Francis Sitting Eagle, Chief Red Fox, Chief Running Horse, Chief Standing Bear, Chief Thunderbird, and no less than three Chief White Eagles. Others making an appearance were Chief Darkcloud and Beulah Darkcloud, Princess Redwing, Chief John Big Tree, Chief Many Treaties, and Strongheart's fellow Yakama, Chief Yowlatchie.[8]

If early Hollywood had "too many chiefs and not enough Indians," Strongheart was among those truly committed to the fight for fairer representation. He wanted to make a film that affirmed his identity and promoted his career while also speaking the truth about his people. Working within the constraints of a studio system that marginalized Indians, he used his knowledge of Yakama tribal culture and history to add notes of cultural authenticity and historical specificity to DeMille's screenplay. The final cut retained many stereotypical elements, such as the ill-fated interracial romance, yet it also emphasized Native initiative and continuity at a time when most movies depicted Indians as a vanishing race. By combining entertainment with education, Strongheart hoped that the picture would help his mother's people and inspire broader demands for policy reform.

At the same time, the willful exaggeration and fabrication of his personal history reveals how fact and fiction are deeply imbricated in Strongheart's quest for employment, empowerment, and identity. For the sake of reaching bigger audiences and teaching larger truths, "Chief Strongheart" was not above telling a few little white lies about himself. Strongheart never became an actual chief. Rather, to borrow a word from the Chinook Jargon he employed in later films, he became a Tinseltown *tyee*.[9] Strongheart's long show business career enabled him to craft a persona that partially masked lingering uncertainty and insecurity about his Yakama heritage. By his own account, he had been born in the reservation town of White Swan on May 15, 1891, the only son of a white man named George Mitchell and a Yakama woman he identified as Leonora Williams, or Chi-Nach-Lut Schu-Wah-Elks, supposedly the daughter of the "Great Yakima Chieftain, Ta-ché-num." His family does not appear in agency

records, however, and he later had difficulty documenting his lineage to the satisfaction of the Yakama Nation's enrollment committee.

Like other Indian performers and public figures of his time, Strongheart often based his authority to speak on precarious claims of "pure" Indian ancestry as well as chiefly lineage. His given name, George Mitchell, Jr., bespoke the "mixed blood" that he sometimes disavowed or disparaged as an adult. He also lamented that, after his mother died, he grew up estranged from Yakama culture. In a 1953 speech to the tribal council, he spoke bitterly of how his father had "denied the Yakima Law, that the child belongs to the mother and to his mother's people," by taking him to be raised among white relatives in Montana. They forced him to live like a white man and forget his native language, but he never forgot that he was Yakama. His intense desire to rebuild his tribal connections and serve tribal interests provided a major driving force in his work for DeMille.[10]

George Mitchell, Jr. became "Nipo Strongheart" through a lifelong process of embracing and embellishing his Indigenous heritage. The transformation began around 1902, when he and his father signed on as trick riders with Buffalo Bill's Wild West show. As he later recalled, the troupe's Lakota performers had dubbed him "Ni-po" after he missed a jump and struck the saddle horn in a sensitive spot, causing him to faint and fall from his horse. He lay unconscious for so long that they thought him dead—one of several possible translations for *ni-po*—and when he finally revived they said that he had come back from the other world. That may explain why he sometimes rendered his name as "Messenger of Light," which is certainly more appealing and dramatic than the alternatives.[11] By his mid-twenties, "Nipo the Kid" had grown into the surname Strongheart. The stories that he told about this title varied over time: in one version, he received it from his illustrious grandfather, and in another, from a medicine man. It is quite possible, though, that he picked the name up after reading or seeing the DeMille play that he would eventually help make into a movie. The knack for appropriation and self-invention so characteristic of the movie industry had become one of the keys to Strongheart's success as a showman well before he arrived in Hollywood.

Strongheart soon left the Wild West for the legitimate stage, and that is probably where he first encountered his eponymous play, *Strongheart*. He certainly knew of it, because the play became both popular and controversial following its debut in 1905. According to a later employment application, he spent much of the period between 1905 and 1917 on the East Coast, working in theater for the renowned producer David Belasco. He claimed appearances in *The Flaming Arrow*, *The Heart of We-to-Na*, and other plays that "interpreted the romance and poetry of the Red Man with skill and fidelity," although not specifically in *Strongheart*.[12] William DeMille's play tells the story of a Dakota Sioux, Soangataha (Strongheart), whose tribe sends him to Columbia University to acquire deeper knowledge of white ways. While there, he becomes a football star and falls for Dorothy Nelson, the sister of one of his white friends. When he confesses his desire to marry her, however, her brother and a white rival for her affections mock him for even harboring the thought. His nemesis then tries to frame Strongheart for passing their team's signals to the opposing side at a big

game. He manages to clear his name and win Dorothy's love, but nobly concludes that he must let her go and return to his own people. Some critics recoiled at the play's open flirtation with interracial marriage, yet it enjoyed a long run in eastern cities before jumping to the big screen in 1914.[13]

During the same period, Strongheart's performances began crossing over from theater to "photoplays." After appearing in early pictures with the Philadelphia-based Lubin Company around 1905, he took a series of uncredited roles in Western shorts such as *The White Chief* (1908), *The Bandit King* (1912), and *The Crisis* (1916). He also claimed to have advised Belasco on the screen adaptation of *The Heart of Wetona* (1919), which includes a character named Nipo, but the exact nature of his contributions is murky. Whatever his role, these productions steeped Strongheart in the melodramatic mode that framed cinematic portrayals of the "Vanishing Red Man." Silent pictures literally and figuratively presented the world in black and white, featuring one-dimensional characters whom viewers could either revere or revile. "In the case of the American Indian," writes film historian Jacquelyn Kilpatrick, "that characterization could be evil, as in the bloodthirsty savage stereotype, or good, as in the noble savage. Indians who were multidimensional human beings with faults and virtues were not to be found in the silent films that first introduced them to the American film audience." This Manichean language informed the dominant discourse within which

Figure 2. *"Chief Strongheart" speaking to a crowd in New York City, 1917. Image courtesy of Yakama Nation Museum, Toppenish, WA.*

contemporary Native performers had to maneuver. They were not entirely without agency or influence, however, as Strongheart demonstrated in his subsequent work for DeMille.[14]

Strongheart's career path did not run straight to Hollywood, but took a winding trail that kept him engaged with live audiences and brought him into closer contact with Native American communities. When the United States entered World War I in 1917, he was living in New York City, far from his Yakama relations and the broader concerns of Indian country. Strongheart promptly registered for the draft but was never called up for duty. "Chief Strongheart" instead served the war effort as a paid lecturer on behalf of bond drives and military recruiting, as well as appearing at training camps in regalia to inspire the troops with stories of his own military service, allegedly as a scout along the Mexican border. Like other so-called Red Progressives, Strongheart believed that Indians' patriotism and sacrifice during the war had earned them the rights of citizenship that many still lacked. "In speaking of the early times," noted one lyceum bulletin, "the Chief said the Indians were pictured as a savage race of people, but he explained that their savagery came largely from the desire to defend their own people and lands against the whites. It is the same desire to protect the home that is in evidence today . . . in the United States and the allied countries." He was "an American," as his handbills stated, and the demand for enfranchisement became the theme of his standard lecture, "From Peace Pipe to War Trail."[15]

After the war, Strongheart parlayed his speaking skills into regular employment on the lyceum and Chautauqua circuits during the 1920s. Film had yet to supplant these older forms of public entertainment, and he made the most of their final decade, crisscrossing the country as Chief Strongheart to build his persona and burnish his reputation. He gave audiences much of what they expected from the Noble Savage—paint and feathers, legends and lore, odes to "the life and soul of a great but vanishing race."[16] He also gave them a sense of connection to famous events and individuals from American history; remarkably, he was somehow both "a son of Chief Running Elk, famous scout of the Nez Perce war and grandson of Chief Standing Rock, who fought in 'Custer's last stand.'"[17] In return, audiences affirmed his Indian identity and heard his calls for change. "He asks for more help for the red man, more recognition and opportunity," said *The Lyceum Magazine*. "After he speaks he asks the people to sign his petition for equal rights to send up to Washington, and gets about all of them."[18] If the "spectacular elements" of Indian pageantry served a useful purpose, as literary scholar Lucy Maddox suggests, so too did the exaggerations and downright untruths. They were yet another "way of attracting and keeping the attention of an otherwise inattentive public that had much to learn and whose attention was necessary if essential reforms were to be made."[19] It was an effective formula that Strongheart soon applied in the movie business as well.

Life on the lecture circuit gave him not only the chance to blend performance with political action, but also to connect with Native communities around the United States. His rigorous touring schedule made him an ideal field representative for the Society of American Indians, an intertribal organization broadly committed to racial uplift and policy reform. Part of Strongheart's mandate was to cultivate support among

Figure 3. *Nipo Strongheart, Chief Frank Seelatsee, Chief Noah Saluskin, and unidentified man (possibly William Lee) in Washington, DC, 1927. Image courtesy of Yakama Nation Museum, Toppenish, WA.*

influential whites and distribute petitions in support of Indian citizenship. However, he also visited reservations and other Indigenous enclaves during his travels to report on their needs, recruit members, and render whatever assistance he could in the moment. These experiences opened his eyes to the severe problems confronting Indian country in the 1920s, ranging from poverty and poor health to the ongoing theft of land and resources. He then incorporated these observations into his lectures, sharpening his critique of the "Indian Bureau System" with specific examples of corruption and mistreatment. His penchant for naming names infused his performances with a purpose higher than mere entertainment, but it also repeatedly got him into trouble with the Office of Indian Affairs—including threats of arrest and temporary dismissal from the Chautauqua circuit in 1923. Shrugging off the danger to his career, he defiantly declared, "I am still *going on and my arrows are dipped in truth* and they make mighty weapons against the enemy."[20]

Although Strongheart considered all American Indians "the people of *my heart*," the people he most wanted to help were his own.[21] Like most contemporary Native communities, the Yakama Nation faced multiple threats to its territorial integrity, economic self-sufficiency, and cultural survival. During trips through the Interior

Northwest between 1921 and 1925, Strongheart began to reconnect with his tribal relations and learn of their struggles against settler colonialism. His first and most important point of contact was Lucullus V. McWhorter, a non-Indian rancher and author who had developed an extensive social network on the reservation after moving to the Yakima Valley in 1903. Known among the Yakamas as Hemene Ka-Wan, or Old Wolf, he had gained their trust by taking up the tribal cause in letters, pamphlets, and books that criticized the many breaches of their 1855 treaty with the United States.

Over the previous thirty years, the policy of allotment had torn gaping holes in the tribal land base and attracted hordes of white settlers, who in turn expropriated most of the water necessary to farm in the semiarid climate of central Washington. McWhorter had exposed this swindle in his 1913 book *The Crime against the Yakimas*. He shared his work with Strongheart, and, despite some personal doubts about his Yakama ancestry, put him in touch with prominent families on the reservation. McWhorter also introduced him to Kate Williams, a Yakama woman who Strongheart identified as his foster mother. These connections kindled within him a burning desire to advance Yakama interests in any way he could. As he explained to McWhorter, "This is my mission and I want to carry on, *I want to help, not myself, but my people*. . . . I am with open heart and outstretch [*sic*] arms to welcome your advice,

Figure 4. *Caesar Williams, Kate Williams, Homer Watson, and Mrs. Homer Watson in Seattle, January 29, 1921. Image courtesy of Museum of History and Industry, Seattle, WA.*

the wish of the Yakima Nation . . . I shall do it with *all of my heart* and *efforts* to help them. I wish nothing in return, only *their friendship*."[22]

For tribal leaders, treaty fishing rights were a more vital concern than even the settlers' theft of water. Since the 1880s, the Yakamas and other Northwest Indians had endured increasing non-Indian encroachment and state interference at off-reservation fisheries secured by treaty. The Seufert Brothers Company, which operated salmon canneries and owned much of the shoreline along the middle Columbia River, had been especially aggressive in challenging tribal rights. Between 1914 and 1919, Seufert's tried to exclude Yakamas from fishing not only on cannery property but anywhere south of the Columbia, arguing that it was outside their official ceded area. The company lost its legal battle on appeal to the Supreme Court, yet state interference with treaty rights continued through the 1920s and beyond. In January 1921, Kate Williams herself accompanied a Yakama delegation to the state capitol in Olympia, Washington, to protest restrictions on tribal fishing near Prosser Dam on the Yakima River.

Strongheart would draw inspiration from these events when he signed on to serve as technical director for DeMille's production of *Braveheart*.[23] Exactly how he landed the job remains a mystery, but the offer likely came through some combination of serendipity, personal connections within the film industry, and skillful self-presentation as an expert on all things Indian. Fortuitously, Strongheart found himself in California and out of work shortly before production began in the spring of 1925. Tired of life on the road, he had been living in the Bay Area for several months, taking odd jobs and night classes in anticipation of attending law school at Stanford University. He lacked the academic credentials and the financial resources to gain admission, however, and he could not afford to stay in San Francisco without steady employment. If he went to Los Angeles, he told McWhorter, perhaps he "could get some movie work in day time, go to night school, get some more education, and then I may be worth somewhat more than I am now." He had contacts in Hollywood from his earlier film experience, and if those yielded nothing, he could always seek a speaking position through the Los Angeles office of the Redpath Chautauqua Bureau.[24]

Strongheart's reputation as an authority on Indian affairs had made him a strong candidate for the position of technical director. During his travels through California, he had become active in the state's Indian Board of Co-Operation and in local branches of the American Indian Defense Association, the reform organization headed by future Commissioner of Indian Affairs John Collier. In January 1925, Strongheart attended Collier's lecture to the Indian Affairs section of the Commonwealth Club, a Bay Area public policy forum interested in the welfare of California tribes. The membership was impressed by the presence of a "full blooded Indian" at the luncheon—an impression that Strongheart likely encouraged because it gave him the cultural capital to speak for his "race"—and he accepted their invitation to give his own address the following month. To his dismay, that "gratis job" (compensated only with a meal that had grown cold by the time he finished talking) produced no employment leads. "These club folks gave me advice on *how* to get a job," he complained, "but did not say where I could find one." The function placed him in the room with well-connected men, though, who

eagerly requested further information that the Commonwealth Club could publish and distribute to its members around the state. Some of those members staffed the club's Motion Picture section, and they may have brought Strongheart to Cecil B. DeMille's attention after he moved to Los Angeles in February.[25]

Strongheart also had acquaintances at the Famous Players-Lasky Corporation, which DeMille had just left to open his own studio in Culver City. The film that became *Braveheart* was one of several chosen to establish his reputation as an independent producer, and to ensure its success, DeMille recruited top talent from his former company. True to Hollywood form, a non-Indian star named Rod La Rocque landed the leading role, with Tyrone Power cast as his father and Lillian Rich as his white love interest. Strongheart, who sometimes mocked his own small stature and thinning hair, did not look stereotypically "Indian" enough to play the strapping hero. His onscreen presence was limited to the minor part of "Medicine Man," but he had more important things to do behind the scenes; in early May, Strongheart signed a contract to provide technical guidance for the production for $200 per week. Contrary to later assertions, he did not work directly with DeMille, who spent most of the year in Russia filming *The Volga Boatman* and handed off *Braveheart* to director Alan Hale. DeMille kept close tabs on the production, though, including changes to the script that Strongheart recommended.[26]

One of his first assignments as technical adviser was to help select a title that would distinguish the movie from the original screen version, not to mention the early 1920s film franchise featuring a "movie star dog" also named Strongheart. A few days after he signed the contract, production editor Elmer Harris asked "our Indian friend"

Figure 5. *Strongheart in publicity photo for DeMille Studio, c. 1926.*

what he thought of the title *Braveheart* as an alternative. Strongheart was initially nonplussed, stating that he had "never heard of that as the name of an Indian," whereas his own surname connoted the virtues of "patience, courage, bravery and sacrifice." Of the other possibilities they discussed—including *The American*, *Race*, *The Red Barrier*, *The Savage Gentleman*, *Red and White*, *This Civilization*, and "*But Not Our Women!*"—he actually preferred *The Redskin*.[27] Despite the term's pejorative connotations, which Harris thought could "be worked very nicely into our text," Strongheart saw it as a more authentic choice:

> He said that the term—Redskin—is used in the Indian sign language to indicate the red man as against the white man. In the sign language, the white man is indicated by a gesture across the forehead, meaning that the white man wears a hat. The Redskin is indicated by rubbing the forefinger of the right hand on the back of the left hand, and indicates the color of the Indian's own hide.[28]

For his part, DeMille liked *The American* but also picked *The Redskin* over *Braveheart* as a "stronger box office title." Other executives considered *The American* too "high-brow," however, while *The Redskin* would brand the film as just a "typical western" rather than the "big epic drama" DeMille aspired to make. They settled on *Braveheart*, which Strongheart conceded "might be a good title as well as a name for the hero." As a technical adviser, he lacked the creative control that he had possessed on the lecture circuit, but he would not stop trying to nudge the production in the direction of greater verisimilitude.[29]

Figure 6. *Mary O'Hara and Nipo Strongheart in publicity photo for* Braveheart, *c. 1920s. Image courtesy of Yakima Valley Museum, WA.*

Strongheart's commitment to crafting a historically authentic and politically pointed narrative shows most clearly in his work on the screenplay. Here again, however, his contributions were overshadowed by others who received greater compensation and credit. In March 1925, DeMille's studio had hired continuity writer Mary O'Hara to create three scripts for a total of $18,000, one of which became *Braveheart*.[30] Relatively new to Hollywood herself, she had achieved considerable success as a scenarist for Metro (later MGM) and director Rex Ingram. In her autobiography, the "Queen Bee" makes no mention of Strongheart or the film, but a publicity photo shows them together with her holding the script. Harris approved O'Hara's adaptation of the original play in June 1925, though he later claimed to have conceived the story himself. While the exact nature of their collaboration with Strongheart remains fuzzy, his fingerprints are literally all over the screenplay. Trying to ground the story in Yakama culture and history, he added details that only he could have known and even crafted whole scenes that ended up on the cutting room floor. Although Hollywood may have compromised Strongheart's vision, as it has so often done with Native artists, such interference hardly negates his agency within the production.[31]

His influence on O'Hara's screenplay is most evident in the film's setting and storyline. In the original draft, the movie opens with a scene depicting the 1855 council at Walla Walla that produced the Yakama Nation's treaty and reservation—neither a widely known event nor a tribe often (ever?) featured in Hollywood films. Washington Territorial Governor Isaac I. Stevens and his secretary are shown interpreting the treaty terms to the fourteen signatory chiefs, including their nominal "head chief," Kamiakin. Speaking through sign language, he agrees to surrender their land but explicitly reserves their rights to salmon, game, berries, and roots, explaining "Our living we must keep." Stevens readily agrees: "It shall be as you say. The fish, the game, the roots and berries everywhere shall be yours forever." Kamiakin does not trust him, however, so he insists upon three "immortal witnesses" to the agreement; the Sun, a snow-capped mountain (Ta-ho-ma, or Mt. Rainier), and the Big River (the Yakama name for the Columbia). Stevens has that written into the treaty too: "[A]s long as the sun shines and the mountain stands and the river flows the Redskin shall hunt and fish at his accustomed places and keep peace with the white man."

All of these details came from Mid-Columbia Indian oral traditions concerning the Stevens treaties, which McWhorter had recently recorded on paper and shared with Strongheart. In fact, some of the lines in the script concerning the Walla Walla treaty council came verbatim from a piece that McWhorter had written around 1921. In an essay entitled "A Notable Indian Gathering," he described a tribal council meeting that year in which Chief Meninock recalled the demands that his father and other treaty signers had made to Governor Stevens: "'We will not give to you our salmon, our game, our food roots and our berries. We will give you our land, but not our food, our living we must keep.'" In response, Stevens had said, "'All right! It shall be as you have spoken. The fish, the game, the roots and berries every where will be yours forever.'" Strongheart either adapted these words for the screenplay or passed them along to O'Hara, who had grown up in the Northeast and showed little interest in Native American history even after moving out West. By contrast, he had a deep personal

investment in the story and direct access to Indian accounts through McWhorter and their contacts on the reservation. Working with these people, he grafted Yakama concerns onto a script that originally had not specifically concerned them.[32]

The original screenplay also contained ethnographic markers that further reveal Strongheart's hand and root the film in the Columbia Basin. With some exceptions, cultural specificity and sensitivity concerning Native Americans were not major concerns in early Hollywood. As Alanson Skinner, assistant curator of the Department of Anthropology at the American Natural History Museum, complained in 1914:

> From the standpoint of a student, most of the picture plays shown are ethnologically grotesque farces. Delawares are dressed as Sioux, and the Indians of Manhattan Island are shown dwelling in skin tipis of the type used only by the tribes beyond the Mississippi. If the Indians should stage a white man's play, and dress the characters in Rumanian, Swiss, Turkish, English, Norwegian and Russian costumes, and place the setting in Ireland, would their plea that they thought all Europeans alike, and that they had to portray a white man's life through standards of their own save them from ridicule?[33]

Strongheart wanted his film to depict the Yakamas properly. Early scenes of an Indian village included shots of salmon drying on racks in traditional Plateau fashion, women pounding and packing fish into buckskin parfleches, and a dog knocking over a cradleboard without hurting the infant. He sent Harris detailed descriptions of popular Plateau pastimes such as stick game and horse racing, while McWhorter proposed including footage of sacred ceremonies that the Yakamas had never allowed to be photographed.

Strongheart also furnished O'Hara with Sahaptin language translations for the names of the principal Indian characters. Apparently, she chose not to incorporate them, but the writing team took his advice seriously. As one note on the third draft said, "All cross marks by Strongheart. Better see on all these things, some are wrong and others incorrect and could stand much improvement." We can only imagine his frustration when the editors eliminated most of the cultural background and the opening council scene. Although the press book called the film "a colorful romance of the Northwest," nowhere does it specifically identify Braveheart's people as Yakamas. Still, thanks to Strongheart's interventions, there is little chance of mistaking them for the Apaches, Comanches, Navajos, and Sioux that populate the majority of early Westerns.[34]

In his quest for historical authenticity, Strongheart went so far as to scout shooting locations on and around the Yakama reservation. The day after starting work, he sent McWhorter a telegram requesting photographs of "local scenes" that could inform the screenplay and potentially appear in the film. McWhorter responded enthusiastically with images and ideas for the script, and he urged Strongheart to lobby for a shoot in the Yakima Valley. "Practically every feature of tribal life can be staged," he wrote, "from the *travos* [*sic*] and pack-horse to the aristocratic automobile; from the rush-mat lodge . . . to the two story dwelling of modern structure." Strongheart's inventory of "essentials for an Indian camp" included modern props like cars and iron stoves as well

Figure 7. *Nipo Strongheart (far right) and Indian extras in* Braveheart, *October 1925.*

as traditional items. The Yakamas would thus appear as a living culture firmly planted in the present, not as generic movie Indians in ersatz paint and feathers. Both men had seen enough of the Wild West to grow tired of its conventions and stereotypes, especially what McWhorter called "the posing of the self-conscious Indian." As he told Strongheart (himself a self-conscious poser), "I think that you are correct wherein the Sioux contingent with its sameness . . . is depicted in the various shows." Staging the movie in Yakama country would offer something "original and unique" to the producers, not to mention personal rewards for Strongheart. If "Brother Nipo" could pull off the move, McWhorter promised, "then you will be solid with our people here, and no mistake." Bringing the movie home would be Strongheart's ticket to authenticity and acceptance by his mother's tribe.[35]

McWhorter also hoped to benefit personally through recognition and vindication of his own efforts on behalf of the Yakama Nation. In a letter written on May 5, he shared "certain phases of [his] career with the Yakimas" that he thought Strongheart could incorporate into the story. Because of his strong stand for tribal land and water rights, McWhorter said, he had suffered "social ostracism" and "faced hidden dangers from gun-men and promoters." In the end, though, the Indian Rights Association credited him with "saving to the Yakimas undetermined millions of dollars; this too, without hope of compensation." Now he might finally receive some recompense,

emotionally and financially, for what he had endured. Although McWhorter never asked to appear in the film, he clearly hoped that it would feature elements of his life:

> Gods! If that story of loot and robbery intended, of the secret connivery of officials and "business" men, the dispairing [*sic*] struggles of the Yakimas, the threatened uprising under Chief Yoomteebee—who adopted me into the tribe—of what was gone through with in thwarting the game of the looters . . . if all this could be filmed, it would prove an interesting story, as well as one throwing light on the methods practiced by "Christians" and damnably crooked officials throughout in dealing with the hapless, and oftimes friendless Indian. What a revelation, could such men as Reece B. Brown, H. B. Miller, Don M. Carr, and some of the Departmental rogues . . . be personated by movie route.[36]

McWhorter was more than happy to furnish "inside information" and drop other commitments to assist the production if the director wanted to include such details. "All this could be done without liability to prosecution," he assured his friend, "and ALL within the truth."[37]

Strongheart was either unable or unwilling to work McWhorter into the script, but they tried their best to get some actual Yakamas on screen. In addition to suggesting locations and scenes, McWhorter recruited potential extras from the reservation and forwarded the names of fourteen chiefs (corresponding to the fourteen "tribes and bands" of the Yakama Nation) to be considered for the film. He recommended a daily wage of $7.50 to $10.00 and added himself at the same rate under the name Old Wolf. As he already had experience organizing delegations for fairs, rodeos, and other public events, he probably intended to serve as a handler for the tribal contingent, which also included a translator and Indian policemen. "Leave it to the Wolf, relative to the old folks sanctioning the features contemplated in the picture," he told Strongheart. "It is going to be great for our tribe, and you can rest easy on the score of its management; so far as gaining the consent of the Yakima chiefs." However, it is debatable whether they actually embraced the idea of having their religious rituals shown to a national audience, and McWhorter later confessed doubts about their enthusiasm. "You know . . . how suspicious the tribesmen are," he complained in June, "and how hard it is to overcome their ignorance in most every thing, and should the Movie people become disgusted . . . then good bye to the entire concern." Whether Strongheart shared his views, such patronizing sentiments demonstrate the conflicted attitudes and mixed motives behind McWhorter's plan for Yakama participation.[38]

By late summer, preparations had been made to shoot on location in the Northwest, and Strongheart deserves credit (or blame) for convincing studio executives that it would be worth the additional expense. Using the photographs and descriptions that McWhorter supplied, he had built a compelling case for staging *Braveheart* in the "Land of the Yakimas" rather than on a studio backlot or another location in California. When DeMille scolded Elmer Harris for the resulting cost overruns, however, Harris blamed his supervisor for sending the company north without his knowledge. That seems unlikely, as even rival studios appeared to be aware of the decision. In late August, Strongheart sent a letter warning McWhorter of "a plot where some folks

Figure 8. *Lucullus McWhorter (far left) with Yakama Indians in regalia, c. 1920s.*

may come and represent themselves as directors and location men, and may even use my name" in order to spy on the production. Other movie companies knew about DeMille's film, he cautioned, "and they may use every trick to get all the information out of you and our people there [and] leave us all in the soup, so trust *no one* unless I am with them." Strongheart said that the "editor" had told him to watch out for espionage—meaning the instructions came from Harris himself—and that "Management" wanted him to accompany the crew on the trip to Yakama country. He was certain of it "because they are taking care of me meanwhile, so that proves to me the sincerity of the DeMille Company, and *only these that I am with are the right parties*."[39]

Sadly, when the time came, nothing turned out as Strongheart hoped it would. He did not travel to the Northwest, and the company never reached the Yakima Valley. Nature itself seemed to conspire against the production. On September 12, Strongheart sent a letter to McWhorter sheepishly explaining that a portion of the cast and crew had come as far as Portland and Astoria, only to be deterred by forest fires and a flood on the Upper Columbia that "scared the company out." Unable to film because of the thick smoke, director Alan Hale headed back to Los Angeles after waiting two weeks for better conditions. He managed to get some footage—including interior shots from an Astoria cannery and footage of the "Three Witnesses" for the original opening sequence—but most was of such poor quality that it had to be redone in Sonoma County, California, in late September and October. Strongheart

came up from Hollywood with a contingent of Plains Indian extras to shoot the required outdoor scenes. The setting was a far cry from the "Land of the Yakimas," and he felt "heart sick" about the failure to deliver on a promise to his people. As he told McWhorter, "it looked to me as there was our chance to get our case before the world or at least to get our Yakima Brothers before the eyes of the world, and at the same time give us a chance to earn a little bit of white-iron, but I am still hoping for the best." There would be no triumphant homecoming for him. Still, to borrow a line from the 1998 film *Smoke Signals*, the finished film got about as close to "Dances with Salmon" as one could expect from Hollywood at that time.[40]

For all his frustrations and failures, Strongheart succeeded in framing an original picture that evoked the Yakama Nation's contemporary fight for justice. Finished in December 1925, *Braveheart* pays homage to the original play but takes the story into new territory. The hero attends college and plays football, but he goes for the specific purpose of acquiring the legal knowledge necessary to defend his tribe's fishing rights against a rapacious cannery owner. The principal villain is Hobart Nelson—an obvious stand-in for Frank Seufert, the head of Seufert Brothers Company—who uses intimidation and violence to drive Braveheart's people away from their traditional fisheries. During his time at the fictional Strathmore College, Braveheart wins the big game and the heart of Nelson's daughter Lucie, whose life he had saved earlier in the film. In doing so, he earns the enmity of Nelson's son, Frank, an open racist who also plays football for Strathmore and frames Braveheart for passing the team's signals to the opposition. He is expelled from school and banished from his tribe, yet he continues to represent his people in court and ultimately wins their case. He then saves them from destruction at the hands of the US Cavalry when the savage Ki-yote, a jealous rival for future leadership of the tribe, tries to start a war by abducting Lucie. After killing Ki-yote in a duel, Braveheart does the noble thing and lets Lucie go (against her wishes) because their races cannot mingle. He then returns to his people and marries the maiden Sky-Arrow, who has loved him from the start.

Even as this resolution reaffirms the trope of the Noble Savage and the theme of doomed interracial romance, *Braveheart* ends with a message of Indigenous persistence. The tribe's treaty is upheld by the law, and so they will continue to fish in perpetuity. It is a dramatically different ending from those seen in most Indian movies of the Silent Era, particularly *The Vanishing American*, against which DeMille's film competed for audience attention. Based on Zane Grey's novel of the same name, the 1925 Paramount production is considered a cinema classic as well as a textbook example of the titular trope of Native disappearance. The original story shares many dramatic conventions with *Strongheart* and *Braveheart*, including a Native protagonist who uses his college education to defend his people, an interracial love affair, and an uprising of not-so-noble savages that have been mistreated by a nefarious white villain. As the title loudly proclaims, though, *The Vanishing American* presumes the final demise of Indians as the inevitable price of progress. The hero, Nophaie, accepts the necessity of assimilation into Euro-American society shortly before dying of a gunshot wound. This conclusion, argues Jacquelyn Kilpatrick, "allows the viewer to 'tolerate' the Native Other, even feel deep sympathy, but without responsibility since

Figure 9. *Rod La Rocque (center) in scene from* Braveheart.

the Indians are soon to be no more." Braveheart, by contrast, lives to lead his people into the future.[41]

Of course, the film's political implications may have been lost on many contemporary viewers. Even DeMille focused on the love story, complaining that it seemed "weak" toward the end. The studio's press book likewise emphasized the romantic and stereotypical elements of the narrative. Exhibitors read that *Braveheart* was "a tremendous story of Indian and college life, dramatic and appealing. The theme deals with the love of a young Indian for a white girl and of his noble sacrifice of his love to save her from shame and humiliation."[42] The suggested catchlines for theater advertisements pounded home this conventional message:

> Braveheart—member of a proud but fallen race—an Indian of intrepid bravery who loved a white woman, for whom he sacrificed his honor and would willingly have given up his life had circumstances demanded it—a man among men. . . . Sent to college to learn the white man's business methods, Braveheart falls in love with—a white girl. When disgrace comes to him, although he is innocent of wrongdoing, he learns the great truth—red and white blood cannot mingle in happiness on the highway of love. . . . The honor of a red man—was it worth while to consider it? Yet Braveheart shoulders another man's guilt to save from disgrace the brother of the girl he loves. What was his reward?[43]

Strongheart may well have asked himself the same question, for the press book omitted any mention of his role in shaping the screenplay. Together with O'Hara and Harris, the art director and the head of photography received all the credit for making *Braveheart* "one of the most notable pictures of the current season."[44]

Although the production exceeded its proposed budget of $245,000, the DeMille Studio had high hopes for the film. Early screenings for exhibitors generated positive feedback and raised expectations for a big splash at the box office. Studio executive Barrett Kiesling expressed some doubts, confidentially confessing his opinion that the film attempted "too many difficult things" and therefore lacked a singular appeal. However, he reconsidered after a Los Angeles movie-house owner bet him a box of cigars that *Braveheart* would eclipse the record returns for *Three Faces East*. DeMille personally regarded that film as "one of the best pictures [he had] ever seen" and "sure fire box office material." Another executive wired DeMille that *Braveheart* was "right on top of 'three faces east' [and] would be great stimulus for the whole organization." "It is a real picture and should go everywhere," concurred the head of DeMille's London distribution office. "With a few leaders of this type we should have no difficulty in putting over our various exchanges in a big way." The letters and postcards mailed out to theater patrons similarly described the film as "a thrilling photoplay of rare beauty and charm and will linger long in the memory." Just two weeks after the final reels were completed, moviegoers in Los Angeles had the chance to judge for themselves.[45]

After the film's release, Strongheart continued to promote the picture and his connection to the story. His appearance at the State Theater in Long Beach on December 28 was the first of dozens at various movie houses across the Los Angeles metropolitan area, stretching into July 1926 and earning him around $585. On the surface, these events served the studio's interests by marketing the movie in a manner consistent with its publicity suggestions. The film's press book encouraged exhibitors to decorate their theater lobbies with tepees, animal skins, and artificial campfires around which people in "Indian garb" could "hold a pow wow." For several days before the opening, owners might "have two Indians, one a young chief, the other a girl, parade your streets. Have the man carry a placard saying, 'I am Braveheart and I'm looking for Sky-Arrow. Have you seen her?'"

Strongheart filled the bill by appearing in tribal regalia, as he had done so often on the lecture platform, but with a serious purpose. At each performance, he gave a talk that placed the movie in context and punched up its political message, apparently to good effect. Writing to Strongheart at the close of his engagement in Long Beach, the theater manager praised his "showmanship manner" with the audience: "You more than entertained every patron with your pleasing personality and the facts with which you made them acquainted during your very entertaining and educational talk." Indeed, the theater had received many phone inquiries regarding his schedule, and the city mayor stopped by after one show to thank Strongheart for a recent visit. As always, he strived to influence and ingratiate people with power to make things happen.[46]

Unfortunately for DeMille, the film did not impress audiences as much as Chief Strongheart did in person. Despite some positive reviews, *Braveheart* failed to recoup its final production cost of $281,000, sparking recriminations within the organization.[47]

Figure 10. *Strongheart with Tyrone Power on location in Sonoma County, October 1925.*

When DeMille leaned on him, Elmer Harris pointed the finger at studio manager Milton Hoffman, another import from Famous Players-Lasky:

> In the case of "Braveheart," I conceived the story and supervised the continuity. You called in Mr. Hoffman and told me in his presence that I was responsible to him. He took the production out of my hands, sent the company to Oregon without my knowledge, disregarded all of my wishes and suggestions, and so influenced the director that my part in the production was merely that of a disconcerted and unhappy spectator. If any merit remains in "Braveheart" it is because my story was not wholly destroyed. If the cost of the production was excessive, it was not in the least my fault.[48]

If this explanation absolved Strongheart of blame for the picture's failings, it also erased his many contributions to a screenplay that Harris considered worth claiming as his own. DeMille never bothered to mention it in his autobiography, and today *Braveheart* is largely forgotten even by students of the mogul's life and work.

For Strongheart, however, the film became a highlight of his entertainment career and an important facet of his self-presentation. Sometime after the movie's release, he penned an apocryphal account of how he had received his surname as a young boy. In this version, it happened following a vision quest, when a "medicine man" dubbed him "'CHTU-TUM-NAH' (Strongheart), because even tho [*sic*] his body was small, his heart was not afraid." "From that time on," he wrote, "Chu-Tum-Nah has been fighting the battles of his people, and he is indeed very happy in his battle, for it is the good

that we do for the happiness of others that brings the reward of happiness to one's self." That much is certainly true. Less so is his postscript, which claimed that the battles he had fought could be seen in *Braveheart*, "the history of the Yakima nation and the life career of Strongheart in behalf of his people."

Likewise, when he returned to the lecture and Chautauqua circuits during the latter half of the 1920s, his updated broadside included still photos from the movie and the assertion that it portrayed him in "the role which he has actually experienced in real life—that of carrying on the fight for the rights for the Indians in their own country." Literally speaking, he was not the son of a famous tribal headman and had never played college football, wooed a white woman, or vindicated Yakama treaty rights in court. He was a celluloid chief, a Tinseltown *tyee*, who leveraged his connections with Indian country into a career in the film industry. Yet in the making of *Braveheart*, he had fought to have his people fairly represented on the silver screen and thereby to influence public opinion, and, perhaps, federal policy. The film was one of the "arrows dipped in truth" that he launched against the settler colonial logic of elimination.[49] Strongheart stayed in Hollywood for another forty years, primarily operating behind the camera to help create less stereotypical and more sympathetic representations of Native Americans.

His career reminds us that Indians and other Indigenous peoples have long been more than just objects of the cinematic gaze, more than mere performers in settler-colonial fantasies. Well before the 1970s, when Vine Deloria Jr. urged Indians to engage in self-representation, Strongheart was trying to assert Indigenous control of the narrative and communicate ideas with the potential to empower Native people. He was not alone. As Beverly Singer notes, contemporary American Indian filmmaking has "a vital history made by an impressive array of film professionals who have paved the way for what is happening today and what can happen in the future."[50] Even when they lacked control over the means of movie production, some Native artists strived to influence the process by working behind the scenes and in collaboration with sympathetic non-Indians. Native technical directors like Strongheart recognized that merely playing the parts assigned to them in conventional Western films would never be enough. He would have agreed with Zoe Escobar, a Yaqui who compiled a registry for Indian actors in 1982 but saw the larger problem as one of creative sovereignty: "You have to get behind the camera before you can get in front of it. Most Indian stuff is written by non-Indians, so a lot of things said about Indians were distorted."[51]

Strongheart was part of a cohort of Native film pioneers that variously criticized, co-opted, and capitulated to the cultural discourses of the Silent Era. Some resigned themselves to Hollywood's treatment of Indians, both as historical subjects and as film professionals, for the sake of steady work. As one contemporary, the supposed Sioux chief Red Fox, confessed in his memoir, "There were times when I wanted to go down to a clean stream and wash away my duplicity, but I had been under the klieg lights a long time, and realized that I could do little to change opinions that were rigidly fixed from the preceding centuries." Although Strongheart never quite resigned himself to playing the "White Man's Indian," he shared Red Fox's desire to make a living and earn recognition in the movie business. They also shared a certain willingness to doctor

their résumés and fudge their personal histories in order to succeed. Strongheart was thus "an ambiguous figure, with a shape-shifter's identity and a hazy history," to borrow Philip Deloria's description of director James Young Deer.

He never achieved the professional stature of Young Deer, nor did he match the personal notoriety of Chief Buffalo Long Lance, the "full-blooded" Blackfeet actor who fell from grace after being exposed as a "mixed-blood" black impostor. He played Indian with the best of them, however, and his quest for tribal belonging illuminates both the process of identity formation and the practice of racial passing in Hollywood.[52] To brand Strongheart a mere charlatan or a fake ignores the genuine connection to the Yakama Nation that he wove, over the course of a long career, from the warp of fact and the weft of fiction. He made himself useful to the Yakamas by translating their history into a form the public could easily absorb and potentially redress with calls for reform. He was, as Nicolas Rosenthal suggests, one of many movie Indians waging a multi-front war for social justice with the weapons of "infrapolitics."[53] Even at the height of the Silent Era, when dehumanizing images of Native Americans filled the screen, he refused to remain silent. His contributions may have been small, his disappointments many, but he was not afraid to talk back to the most powerful men in the movie industry. In that way, perhaps, Strongheart truly earned his name.

Acknowledgments

The research for this essay was completed with the help of a Phillips Fund Grant from the American Philosophical Society, a short-term fellowship from the Charles Redd Center at Brigham Young University, and a summer research fellowship from the Autry Museum in Los Angeles. The author would also like to thank Heather Hull, Liz Williams, Merida Kipp, and the staff of the Yakama Nation Library and Museum for their assistance and support over the past seven years.

Notes

1. Cecil B. DeMille, prod., *Braveheart* (Los Angeles: Cecil B. DeMille Studios, 1925); William C. DeMille, *Strongheart*: An American Drama in Four Parts (New York: G. W. Dillingham, 1904); *Strongheart* (New York: Klaw & Erlanger/Biograph Company, 1914).

2. Cecil B. DeMille Pictures Corporation, "Play Dates and Theatres of *Braveheart* and *Strongheart*," Folder 23-16, Strongheart Collection, Yakama Nation Library, Toppenish, WA (hereafter cited as "YNL"); Roy Reid to Chief Ni-Po Strongheart, January 3, 1925, YNL, Folder 23-5.

3. Press book for *Braveheart*, Cecil B. DeMille Pictures Corporation, YNL, Folder 23-7 (hereafter cited as "press book").

4. During the 1990s, the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation returned to the original English spelling of their tribal name in order to distinguish themselves from the county and city of Yakima. Quotations with the variant spelling have not been changed.

5. Philip J. Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 231–33.

6. Ibid., 89.

7. Kiara M. Vigil, *Indigenous Intellectuals: Sovereignty, Citizenship, and the American Imagination, 1880–1930* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 3; Linda Scarangella McNenly, *Native Performers in Wild West Shows: From Buffalo Bill to Euro Disney* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012), 8–10. McNenly follows Mary Louise Pratt and other theorists in defining contact zones as "(post)colonial spaces of interaction by multiple participants with various agendas involving unequal power relationships, but with the possibility of agency by marginal groups." They entail "a two-way process of interaction and cultural production," not a one-way street paved entirely by the dominant group (11).

8. Diane MacIntyre, "A Golden Quiver of Native Americans from the Silent Era," *The Silents Majority: Online Journal of Silent Film* (mdle@primenet.com, 1997), print copy in Library and Archives of the Autry Museum, Los Angeles, CA, MS. 641, The Richard Davis or Chief Thunderbird Collection, Box 2, Folder "Correspondence, Grace Slaughter (great-granddaughter) and Susan Shown Harjo (great-granddaughter)."

9. In Chinook Jargon (a trade language developed during the fur trade era in the Pacific Northwest) *tyee* means "chief, leader, boss"; see Chinuk Wawa Dictionary Project, *Chinuk Wawa/kakwa nsayka ulman-tilixam łaska munk-kəmtəks nsayka/as Our Elders Teach Us to Speak it* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2012). On later films, most notably *Across the Wide Missouri* (1951), Strongheart translated Indian dialogue into Chinook Jargon to lend an air of authenticity and to avoid the use of the broken English characteristic of many earlier Westerns.

10. *History of Hollywood*, Biographical, vol. II, ed. Daieda Wilcox and E. O. Beveridge Palmer (Los Angeles: Arthur H. Cawston, 1937), 265; Richard V. La Course, "The Strongheart Papers in the Yakama Nation Library Archives" (Toppenish, WA, 1994), YNL, 11; Draft of speech to Yakama tribal council, c. 1953, unprocessed Strongheart papers, Yakama Nation Museum (hereafter cited as "YNM"); Diary entry for July 17, 1953 Datebook, YNM. On the politics and rhetoric of Indian "blood" at this time, see Vigil, *Indigenous Intellectuals*, 18–20.

11. "The Story of Nipo Strongheart," Folder 23-19, YNL, 4; *History of Hollywood*, 265. There is considerable uncertainty surrounding the translation of "Nee-ha-Pouw," or Nipo. *Ní* is "to live" in Lakota, and *po* is a command spoken by a man to more than one person. Nipo could thus be the imperative form of "live," or a contraction of *nípi yo* (a male gender ending for a command), meaning "he lives." Another intriguing possibility is that Nipo represents a combination of *ní* with *áŋpo* (dawn), which comes closer to the phonetic spelling Nee-Ha-Pouw and the gloss "Messenger of Light." It is also plausible that the Sioux performers believed he was dead or thought it was funny to say so. According to Stephen Riggs's *Dakota-English Dictionary* (Minneapolis: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1992), "ni-po" means dead: "This is probably Ojibwe, but frequently used by the Dakotas when speaking with white people who do not understand their language" (Riggs, 341). It has also been suggested that the phoneme Nee-ha-Pouw constitutes a Lakota joke name given in reference to his fall from the horse: *ni* (breath) plus *ipoh* (contracted from *ipogan*, meaning to blow out, or blow away); the literal translation would be "breath knocked out of him." My thanks to Mike Cowdrey, Susana Geliga, Todd Kerstetter, and the other members of the H-AMINDIAN listserv who shared their opinions on this question.

12. "Chief Invades Camps," *Coit-Alber Review* [c. 1918], Folder 21-20, YNL.

13. California State Personnel Board Application for Employment, January 28, 1938, YNL; *History of Hollywood*, 265; Craig Timberlake, *The Bishop of Broadway: The Life and Work of David Belasco* (New York: Library Publishers, 1954), 378; "The Author of 'Strongheart' Replies to His Critics," *New York Times*, October 31, 1908, BR641.

14. *History of Hollywood*, 265; Jacquelyn Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians: Native Americans and Film* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 33.

15. "Chief Invades Camps," *Coit-Alber Review* [c. 1918], Folder 21-20, YNL.

16. "Indian Chief Thrills with Romance and Legend of Great but Vanishing Yakimas," *The Huntington Press*, February 27, 1921, 9.

17. "Chief Strongheart Leaves Film for Chautauqua," *The Leavenworth Echo*, July 8, 1921, 3.

18. "Ellison-White Coast Sixes," *The Lyceum Magazine*, July 1921, YNL, Folder 21-28.

19. Lucy Maddox, *Citizen Indians: Native American Intellectuals, Race, and Reform* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2005), 53.

20. Maddox, *Citizen Indians*, 9–14; Thomas G. Sloan to Nipo Strongheart, January 29, 1924, Folder 20-13, YNL; Thomas Bishop to Floyd L. Mathews, December 30, 1922, Folder 18-92, YNL; Nipo Strongheart to Lucullus McWhorter, January 21, 1921, Folder 114-1, Click Relander Collection, Yakima Valley Regional Library, Yakima, WA, 4 (emphasis in original; hereafter cited as "Relander Collection").

21. Nipo Strongheart to Big Foot (Lucullus McWhorter), January 18, 1921, Relander Collection, Folder 114-1, 2 (emphasis in original).

22. Ibid.; Lucullus Virgil McWhorter, *Yellow Wolf: His Own Story* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1940); Lucullus McWhorter to Carol Montezuma, November 22, 1922, Relander Collection, Folder 114-1; George Strongheart to Lucullus McWhorter, January 18, 1923, Relander Collection, Folder 114-1, 3–4 (emphasis in original).

23. Andrew H. Fisher, *Shadow Tribe: The Making of Columbia River Indian Identity* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010), 162–68.

24. Nipo Strongheart to He-Men-Kawan, January 9, 1925, Relander Collection, Folder 114-1, 1–8; Nipo Strongheart to Lucullus McWhorter, February 11, 1925, Relander Collection, Folder 114-1, 8–9.

25. Charles de Y. Elkus, "National Indian Expert Will Address Section This Wednesday Noon," January 10, 1925, Commonwealth Club of California Announcements, YNL, Folder 18-29; Strongheart to McWhorter, February 11, 1925, Relander Collection, Folder 114-1, 10–11 (emphasis in original). The Commonwealth Club's membership included attorneys, bankers, businessmen, capitalists, doctors, realtors, and public officials from all levels of state government. The chair of the Indian Affairs section, Charles de Young Elkus, was a lawyer in San Francisco and an early supporter of John Collier's reform agenda. Shortly before Strongheart started work for DeMille, the Commonwealth Club hosted a meeting on the subject of "Motion Pictures and the Public," at which member Frederick W. Beetson spoke on behalf of the Motion Picture Producers Association of Los Angeles. He served as the secretary and treasurer of that organization and could have referred Strongheart to DeMille as an expert on American Indian history and culture. See *Transactions of the Commonwealth Club of California* 20, no. 3 (San Francisco: May 1925), 89–109.

26. Scott Eyman, *Empire of Dreams: The Epic Life of Cecil B. DeMille* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010), 212–16; L. M. Goodstadt to Fred Kley, Miss Rosson, Mr. Stevenson, June 10, 1925, Box 259, Folder 9, MSS 1400, Cecil B. DeMille Papers, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT (hereafter cited as "DeMille Papers"); Executive Meeting Minutes, December 12, 1925, DeMille Papers, Box 259, Folder 9, 3. In an unattributed quotation taken later, Strongheart claimed, "[DeMille] wanted to do a picture on my life and the history of the Yakima Nation. I collaborated on the screenplay, but Rod La Rocque played me. I played a medicine man"; see MacIntyre, "A Golden Quiver," 2.

27. Elmer Harris to Cecil B. DeMille, May 12, 1925, DeMille Papers, Box 259, Folder 12, MSS 1400; Barrett Kiesling to Cecil B. DeMille, May 6, 1925, DeMille Papers, Box 259, Folder 17, MSS 1400.

28. Harris to DeMille, May 12, 1925.

29. Barrett C. Kiesling to George Harvey, May 19, 1925, DeMille Papers, Box 259, Folder 17, MSS 1400; Barrett C. Kiseling to Cecil B. DeMille, June 3, 1925, DeMille Papers, Box 261, Folder

15, MSS 1400; Charles Beahan to Cecil B. DeMille, May 14, 1925, DeMille Papers, Box 261, Folder 13, MSS 1400.

30. Mary O'Hara, *Flicka's Friend: The Autobiography of Mary O'Hara* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1982), 145–58. O'Hara later became famous for her series of bestselling children's novels that began with *My Friend Flicka*.

31. Cecil B. DeMille to L. M. Goodstadt, March 24, 1925, DeMille Papers, Box 259, Folder 9, MSS 1400; L. M. Goodstadt to Mr. Stephenson, June 5, 1925, DeMille Papers, Box 259, Folder 9, MSS 1400; Elmer Harris to Cecil B. DeMille, March 27, 1926, DeMille Papers, Box 264, Folder 15, MSS 1400; Executive Meeting Minutes, December 31, 1925, DeMille Papers, Box 259, Folder 1, MSS 1400.

32. Original screenplay of *Braveheart*, YNL, Folder 23-1, 1–5; Andrew H. Fisher, "This I Know from the Old People: Yakama Indian Treaty Rights as Oral Tradition," *Montana, The Magazine of Western History* 49, no. 1 (1999): 2–17, http://www.jstor.org/stable/4520112; He-mene Ka-wan [Lucullus V. McWhorter], "A Notable Indian Gathering," no date [c. 1921], Box 44, Folder 426, Lucullus V. McWhorter Collection, Special Collections, Washington State University, Pullman.

33. Skinner is quoted in Kevin Brownlow, *The War, the West, and the Wilderness* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978), 329.

34. "Notes for Mr. Elmer Harris. May, 12th 1925," YNL, Folder 23-11; Third draft of screenplay for *Brave Heart*, YNL, Folder 23-3; "Catching Catchlines for use in Advertising Rod La Rocque's 'Braveheart,'' YNL, press book.

35. Big Foot (Lucullus McWhorter]) to Nipo Strongheart (telegram), May 5, 1925, YNL, Folder 22-75; Big Foot to Strongheart, May 5, 1925, YNL, Folder 22-73, 1–3; Big Foot to Strongheart, May 12, 1925, Folder 22-73; Essentials for and [*sic*] Indian Camp, YNL, Folder 23-17, 1–2; Big Foot to Strongheart, May 22, 1925, YNL, Folder 22-72.

36. Big Foot to Brother Nipo, May 5, 1925, YNL, Folder 22-7, 1–2.

37. Ibid.

38. List of Chiefs and Head-Men of the Yakimas, YNL, Folder 23-15; Big Foot to Brother Nipo, May 22, 1925, YNL, Folder 22-72, 2; Big Foot to Brother Nipo, June 18, 1925, YNL, Folder 22-68.

39. Harris to DeMille, March 27, 1926, DeMille Papers, Box 264, Folder 15, MSS 1400, R. M. Donaldson to Fred Kley, October 9, 1925, DeMille Papers, Box 262, Folder 3; Big Foot to Strongheart, June 4, 1925, YNL, Folder 22-70; Strongheart to Big Foot, August 23, 1925, Relander Collection, Folder 114-1, 2 (emphasis in original).

40. Brother Nipo to Big Foot, September 12, 1925, Relander Collection, Folder 114-1, 1–3 (emphasis in original); "Big Bunch of Movie Actors Come," *Healdsburg (CA) Tribune*, September 28, 1925, 2; "Healdsburg People Attend Entertainment at Guerneville," *Healdsburg (CA) Tribune*, October 1, 1925, 2; *Smoke Signals*, ShadowCatcher Entertainment, 1998, dir. Chris Eyre, screenplay and original book Sherman Alexie. Alexie's "Dances with Salmon" joke references the three-hour Western film *Dances with Wolves* (1990), dir. Kevin Costner.

41. Kilpatrick, *Celluloid Indians*, 29–33. An intriguing possibility, yet to be explored, is that Paramount/Famous Players was the rival studio that Harris and Strongheart suspected of spying on their production.

42. L. M. Goodstadt to Cecil B. DeMille, December 7, 1925, DeMille Papers, Box 259, Folder 9; "Unsurpassed Screen Classic Is 'Braveheart,'" press book, YNL.

43. "Catching Catchlines for use in Advertising Rod La Rocque's 'Braveheart,'' press book, YNL.

44. "'Braveheart,' An Epical Indian Photoplay," press book, YNL.

45. E. O. Gurney to G. M. Davidson, September 1, 1925, DeMille Papers, Box 261, Folder 14; Barrett Kiesling to Flinn, December 16, 1925, DeMille Papers, Box 262, Folder 1; Cecil B. DeMille

to John C. Flinn, November 28, 1925, DeMille Papers, Box 262, Folder 1; John C. Flinn to Cecil B. DeMille, December 28, 1925, DeMille Papers, Box 262, Folder 1; Copy of letter to Messrs. Famous Films, J. V. Musil & Co., Prague, author unknown, December 13, 1925, DeMille Papers, Box 260, Folder 20; E. O. Gurney to G. M. Davidson, December 8, 1925, DeMille Papers, Box 261, Folder 14; "'Braveheart' Spells Coin for Exhibitors," press book. YNL.

46. "Play Dates and Theaters of Braveheart and Strongheart," YNL, Folder 23-16; "'Braveheart Spells Coin for Exhibitors," press book, YNL; Roy Reid to Chief Ni-Po Strongheart, January 3, 1925 [1926], YNL, Folder 23-5.

47. "'Braveheart' at Unique Is Fine Dramatic Story," *Santa Cruz (CA) News*, March 23, 1926, 2.

48. Elmer Harris to Cecil B. DeMille, March 27, 1926, DeMille Papers, Box 264, Folder 15. A short time later, Harris quit the studio out of frustration with another manager's interference and arrogance, ending a twenty-year working relationship with DeMille; see Elmer Harris to Cecil B. DeMille, December 16, 1925, DeMille Papers, Box 264, Folder 15.

49. "Strongheart (CHTU-TUM-NAH)," YNL, Folder 23-18; *Strongheart* handbill, c. 1925, Redpath Chautaqua Bureau Records, Series 1: Talent Correspondence and Brochures,

Box 64, Folder 13, MsC0150A, Special Collections, University of Iowa Libraries, 3.

50. Beverly R. Singer, *Wiping the War Paint Off the Lens: Native American Film and Video* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), x–xi.

51. Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places*, 94–103; Frank Sanello, "American Indian actor have registry," *L.A. Life*, February 8, 1989, Vertical Files – NA Film Actors, Library and Archives of the Autry Museum, Los Angeles, CA.

52. Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places*, 94; Donald B. Smith, *Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance: The Glorious Impostor* (Alberta, CN: Red Deer Press, 2000); Red Fox with Cash Asher, *The Memoirs of Chief Red Fox* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971), 157.

53. Nicolas G. Rosenthal, *Reimagining Indian Country: Native American Migration and Identity in Twentieth-Century Los Angeles* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 31–48.