

DEDICATION

This report is dedicated to the memory of its first chairman, Senator Robert F. Kennedy—a man who cared deeply and spoke out.

Brave Heart

(By John Belindo, Executive Director, National Congress of American Indians)

This Brave Heart Light surrounded by Brown Faces, so sad to be themselves. We have seen him staring at primitive landscape, broken treaties and broken hearts.

The Brown Children have sung :
garbled chords of muted war-like
music from tiny buffalo robes,
“We are no longer little hops
from the hogans and pueblos,
we are no longer little pinion
hulls in a bowl.”

The sun where nothing lives,
pours life into the silence of the trees.
A cedar sprouts nearby growing
in warm felicity and grace.
Brave Heart with his eyes disclosed
all the secrets of his art
astonishing the elders—
Rising on the battlefield against
his own native Stars and Stripes,
pitifully lean, crying out at the American
conscience against Sand Creek and boarding schools.
It is enchanting to hear the warrior sing :

“We will never leave the sand hills,
forests, the valleys,
we will never leave the grass,
high summits and high winds,
we will joy in the reflection of the
sunlight from the white snow.”

Brave Heart often quoted a famous man :
“Men are not made for safe havens.”
Nor were they always found amid the
luxuries of civilization.
We have heard Brave Heart live loyalty and bravery.
A young Irish warrior rooted in the same soil which
nourished Crazy Horse, Gail, Sequoyah, Osceola,
Joseph Brant and Pope :

Across the dour howl of Oklahoma
South Dakota, New Mexico, Florida,

Maine and New York. One expects to
go on forever over and over into paradise.
Our Best Braves rode with him to a
Greater Destiny.

Warriors love a jeu de barres—coup in the afternoon,
afterward speaking eloquently to the people,
and they listened.

Whirling blankets of grey dust enshroud
the words of ancient prison-wearied Patriarchs;
White Men, shooting and stabbing while Black Kettle flew the
Stars and Stripes:

White Men drunk with the clang of railroads,
devoid of reason, not wanting to hear the true
outspoken words of Brave Heart.

The war-bonneted, Brown Culture trapped in the quagmire of
policy and commitment.

A way of life annihilated by the gripping forces of progress,
Spiritual law and order left to bleach on an arid ant hill,
Humaneness dying agonizingly.

America may regret her modern hatred of
the Dark people the cowboy's insolence,
our programmatic substitution for traditional values:
We may weep for wind-swept sand, dawn-crowned mesas,
the buffalo dances of Mandans and Arikaras.

Sacajeweah "danced with extravagant joy"
said Lewis and Clark in historic reflections.

Now Bird Woman has vanished on wings bearing Shoshonean
laughter accented across lifeless prairie dog mounds
filled with rusted Jefferson "peace medals."

The Mandans wail, singing chants of fatalism
on the Missouri River:

"We live in fear,
we welcome death,
our children covered with spotted red ochre,
our children covered with dirt.

We will vanish from the earth,
we will lose our bark houses,
we will lose our loved ones,
the White Man will cover us up with his smiles, his promises.

The White Man will burn
our boats, our dead.
The White Man will kill us."

Brave Heart wept and then rode away into
solitude so profound we saw only the
richness of the vegetation and wild animals.

The drum was beaten only by great men,
yea, the chant was sung throughout the camp.

So, Brown People began the procession of the calumet—
a never ending circle of peace and harmony.

We have heard his death song.
We lament Brave Heart's journey to the sea
we will never forget him.