

Forward of Diplomats in Buckskins Copyright 1998-2005
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Herman Viola asked me to provide a foreword for this reprinting of his classic work on Indian delegations, I was delighted to comply for a couple of reasons. First, I consider him one of our country's best historians of the American Indian and, just as importantly, their friend and mine. The primary reason is that *Diplomats in Buckskins* is a marvelous book that tells an important story. I knew his book long before I knew Herman. In fact, it was through this book that we became friends. I have had a copy of *Diplomats in Buckskins* on a shelf in my congressional office for years. As one of the few American Indians ever to serve in the United States Congress, I have enjoyed reading about how the old-time Indians dealt with my legislative forebears. In some ways little has changed in the past two hundred years. Indians today are still concerned with preserving their sovereignty, their land, and their culture. As a result, what has evolved over time is a body of law that is becoming increasingly complex and, in many cases, controversial. Today tribal governments are responsible for carrying out a broad mandate. Whether it is complying with federal mandates or working with state authorities on jurisdictional and regulatory issues, success depends on how tribal governments can effectively address the needs of a diverse population, both Indian and non-Indian.

As the only American Indian in Congress, I have been given the unofficial mantle of spokesperson for Indian issues on Capitol Hill. Many of my colleagues in both the House and the Senate turn to me for advice on legislation that may affect Indian people. Indians continue to be effective lobbyists and I am frequently visited by tribal delegations from around the country. Whatever their concern education, water rights, economic development-I am sure to hear of it.

I welcome these visits and I try to help, but my first obligation is to the people of Colorado, the people who put me in office. That is one reason I was pulling so hard for my Menominee friend Ada Deer when she ran for Congress from Wisconsin in 1992. I told her I needed the help with our Indian constituency. Fortunately, President Clinton saw fit to appoint her Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Indian Affairs, which means she has charge of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. She has the distinction of being the first woman to head up Indian affairs in our nation's history. I know Indians, both young and old, are proud of her accomplishments.

As we near the close of the twentieth century, our Indian peoples can reflect on the changes that have occurred in the past two hundred years. When the tribal delegates, whose stories are so well told in this book, first came to the nation's capitol, they came as sovereign leaders of their people. They conducted their business with the United States on a government to government basis. By the time of the American Civil war, their sovereignty had dwindled away. For the past century and a half the tribes were little more than wards of the government. Like their leaders who died in Washington and were buried in Congressional Cemetery, our tribal peoples were largely forgotten and ignored.

One of those leaders in Congressional Cemetery is a Pawnee chief named Tuckalixtah who died in Washington in March 1859. Tuckalixtah somehow never even got a tombstone. In November 1994, as part of the activities for American Indian heritage month, employees at the Bureau of Indian Affairs took it upon themselves to provide his grave with an appropriate headstone. Tuckalixtah's story was told in this book and, appropriately, the inscription on his headstone came from it as well. I think this indicates the impact *Diplomats in Buckskins* has had since its original publication in 1981. I am pleased to have had a part in seeing it reprinted and made available to another generation of readers to enjoy and appreciate.

Like Tuckalixtah, our tribal peoples, too, are receiving renewed and proper atten-

tion. In April of this year, President Clinton held a grand summit in Washington City for our nation's tribal leaders. He reaffirmed to the 300 delegates who assembled here his intention to restore much of the inherent sovereignty that is rightfully due the Indian tribes of the United States. The old-time Indian delegates would have been pleased.

Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell November 1994

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