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Bonnie Jean Adams

Loyola University Chicago

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SENDING AN AMERICAN INDIAN VOICE. D'ARCY MCNICKLE--EDUCATOR, ANTHROPOLOGIST, HISTORIAN--AN INTELLECTUAL BIOGRAPHY.

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP & POLICY STUDIES

BY
BONNIE JEAN ADAMS
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

For my Mother and Father, who always made me believe that I could do anything. And for all of those others, friend and foe alike, who always dared me to try.

Thank you to Dr. R. Allan Zimmer, Distinguished Professor of Education Emeritus, Concordia University-River Forest, Illinois, who encouraged me to continue my studies.

Thank you does not seem word enough, although it is no less profound sentiment, to my advisor, Dr. Gerald Gutek, to the other members of my committee, Dr. Janis Fine, and Dr. Steven Miller, and to all my professors at Loyola University-Chicago, Illinois.

And especially, in acknowledgement of D'Arcy McNickle who did not expound upon his philosophy but lived it, who wrote history well because he heard and recorded all voices. I am better person, educator, historian for having ‘known’ you.
Practically all wisdom arises as a substitute for what a man would like, but dare not or is not able, to do.

D’Arcy McNickle, 20 March 1931, Journal entry

Sanity is that fluidity of mind and personality which continues at all times, in all circumstances, aware of relationships--the individual’s relation to other individuals, to his times, to his circumstances--and because of this awareness allows no walls to be built which will confine and restrict--crystallize--this fluidity, rendering it subject to categorical description; accordingly, opinions are expressed tentatively, beliefs are frankly stated in terms of motion, as are prejudices, faith is regarded as a constitutional bias, while knowledge is the one road that can be followed, and it only so long as it remains in the clear. As will be inferred, very few people can be called sane.

D’Arcy McNickle, 12 April 1932, Journal entry
PREFACE

While working as volunteer archivist at The Newberry Library, assigned to cataloging duties one rainy Saturday afternoon, I discovered the diaries of D'Arcy McNickle, and I began to read them. My reading continued for so many more Saturday afternoons. I began to know someone with whom I shared so much. I genuinely liked this man who wrote so honestly about his own self-doubt and good intentions. "...I have a very poor equipment for writing...a writer must combine many arts and have in him much of the scholar. But in the last few years I have not been improvident with my time and I know that I shan't in future!" He struggles with shyness in large group social situations, and remains uncomfortable in business meetings. "...a ghastly ineptness overcomes me. I cannot find a single word to utter..."

But he could write, and it was by reading what he wrote, his own journals, and stories, that this scholar came to know D'Arcy McNickle. He was an untraditional man, who, when faced with challenges, created his own opportunities, and because of this, made a path for others to follow. His was a life interrupted by circumstance, but not determined by it. Not only a role model for his own people, McNickle was a pioneer, and a self-made man, the character of which is so much admired in American history. The reason that this is so has been variously attributed by others to the hyphenated role of the man: author- educator- anthropologist- activist- historian. Indeed, had he chosen to be
any one of these, D'Arcy McNickle would have been remembered.

He is most often remembered for his fiction because the author's portrayal of his character reflects his own private journey from ignorance, to knowledge and pride in his American Indian heritage. While others have written about D'Arcy McNickle's life, and analyzed his novels in relationship to biographical fact, and written about the importance of his novels as contribution to literature and to history, little has been written about both the fiction and nonfiction of D'Arcy McNickle. By reading what has been written about D'Arcy McNickle, one learns biographical fact, and how this is reflected in his novels. Yet, his non-fiction is of equal importance. He wrote history well because he heard and recorded all voices. His intention was to be only the first among many future Indian historians and anthropologists who would be able to write history.

It is important that D'Arcy McNickle's legacy not be so limited. Not only an author of novels which reflected American Indian heritage, and contributed to cultural literature, the history he wrote contributed to cultural knowledge and understanding. Not enough has been written about this man, whose influence has been recognized by American Indian authors and acknowledged by literary scholars, yet continues to go unrealized by historians. This biography of D'Arcy McNickle will focus upon his intellectual development, those factors of time and geography which contributed to making him who he was, those who influenced him, and those he influenced not only by his writing, but by the way in which he lived his life. The making of the man, the evolution of his philosophy, the influence of his life and work is reflected in his nonfiction. D'Arcy McNickle's contribution as historian continues to go unrecognized.
McNickle was not only an author, but also an educator, anthropologist and historian; each position contributed to the making of the man, and to the extent of his influence. Through an analysis of D'Arcy McNickle's life, with particular focus on his adult years 1930-1960, as he recorded in his personal journals, and written work, particularly his nonfiction; this author hopes to identify the educational ideas of D'Arcy McNickle. His life and philosophy have made and continue to make, not only a valuable contribution to American Indians' identity, but to all history.

The purpose of this research is to identify D'Arcy McNickle's life philosophy through his writing. This will be accomplished through identification of recurrent themes throughout his written work, his journals, and his publications. Such themes as his accomplishments despite adversity, the habits of the self-made man, a lifelong learner, identification of mentors, and a fair judge of character (seeing the gray). What experiences made D'Arcy McNickle the man he was and what contributed to his own American Indian voice? Why is his an important example to follow?

This dissertation will place the entire work in American Indian historical context. It is American Indian relationships, memories, experiences that define this man. Whatever activities and accomplishments that can be credited to D'Arcy McNickle, they must be realized within the context of that which contributed to the making of the man. Secondary sources authored particularly by American Indians will provide necessary information. Laws and media record which directly influence the story will be quoted within the text. What is written by D'Arcy McNickle, will be credited within the text because this is his story. All others quoted will be American Indians. Their quotes will be credited at the
end of each chapter. This writer shares the American Indians' belief, and this work will reflect in the telling, that what is spoken is more important than who speaks it, a method reflective of the Pan-Indian voice that D'Arcy McNickle encouraged.

An untraditional man, whose life was continually interrupted by circumstance, but never determined by it. What is most admirable about D'Arcy McNickle is that when he faced obstacles, he not only continued to move onward, but made a path for others to follow. "Practically all wisdom arises as substitute for what a man would like, but dare not or is not able to do." As one of the first American Indian scholars, authors and historians, his life and his legacy is left too much unknown.
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ABSTRACT

D'Arcy McNickle was one of the first American Indian anthropologists, historians, and novelists. While he is best known as a novelist; his three novels about American Indian life being much critiqued and analyzed by scholars, his work as anthropologist, historian and educator is not enough known. Rather than telling his story as an outsider might, this author has attempted to tell the story of D'Arcy McNickle's life in his own words. By quoting from his journals, correspondence, vitae, and other documents from his personal files.

Having had the privilege and the opportunity of access to invaluable primary sources for this study, this author felt it to be of primary responsibility to let the subject speak for himself. The reader of this work will learn about the D'Arcy McNickle, how he came to be who he was, and what he contributed to American Indian voice. In the first chapter, D'Arcy McNickle's early childhood and boarding school experience is placed in the context of American History. The second chapter describes his University education, the New York experience and his early efforts as an author. The third chapter recounts McNickle's contribution to our understanding of American Indians through his work with the BIA, his activism and authorship. The final chapter summarizes McNickle's legacy.

For the most part, those quoted are American Indians. The purpose of the author in doing this is to make this work as much American Indian voice as possible. It is
the hope of this author that this methodology will be more often adopted by others; that increased use of primary sources will be located, and used, so that not only American Indian voices will be more often heard in the recording of history, but the voices of all those who have been not so much forgotten, perhaps, as overlooked. Only if we listen firsthand to the voices of others will we begin to hear the truth. As scholars, writing honest history, as ethical men and women, we have the responsibility to do no less.
CHAPTER 1

ECHOES - Heritage

Introduction

If heritage is the fate assigned to every man, then the search for one's own place, creation of one's own identity could be said to be the legacy of fate. Every individual, throughout his life, remains in the process of creating himself, making his way, and hopefully, his mark in the memory of others. For every individual, this is a different path, a special life story. To attempt to understand another, even one person from a culture other than your own, is a challenge and an ongoing process. If ignorance precludes understanding, so does compassion. To see what is there for what it is, is difficult at best. This is why it is important that this work will reflect the American Indian's voice. All quotes will be those taken from American Indian speakers.

As no man can be known or understood if he or his work is removed from the context of the historical time period in which he lived; both geography and history being the foundation of the man, it is important that this work place D'Arcy McNickle, the man, one of the first American Indian scholars, authors, anthropologists, activists, historians in national historical context, and particularly, in American Indian historical context. The place that D'Arcy McNickle made for himself can only begin to be known by reading what
he has written in his own words, 'hearing' his voice. While it would, perhaps, do no
injustice to D'Arcy McNickle if this work focused on any one of his accomplishments,
quoted what others wrote about him, and analyzed what was written, it would certainly
deprive the reader of the opportunity to begin to know the man, to begin to understand
the echoed past, to begin to hear the voice, and to realize, indeed, that D'Arcy McNickle
was only the first of many, a chorus of American Indian voices.

This writer has learned much from reading D'Arcy McNickle's journals and other
of his works. Recall the story of a Zuni kachina, who came out of the underworld
attached back to back to a person from an alien world. Because they were obscured from
each other's sight, it was thought that neither one was destined ever to see nor to
understand the other. There remains the possibility that there may come a time for turning
around, so that each may know who the other is and what the other might become.

American Indian Time

He had the vivid imagery of a song which went back and back into mistiness, like a
living thread of water which you might watch from a grassy hilltop inlaying its
silvered course in the prairie and disappearing with a final gleam on the horizon's
uncertain edge. So it was a song, En roulant a boule, roulant, (Roll along, my ball!
Roll on...) rather than a connected narrative, which he knew so intimately. Yet it
was a song which gave him a full sense of the narrative. Words would never fill out
any more vividly the passages which he knew by knowing images alone. En roulant
ma boule, roulant was four hundred years of history captured in a phrase as no book
would ever catch it.

D'Arcy McNickle,"En roulant ma boule, roulant..."
When the American Indian arrived on this continent is unknown, and the debate continues. When the first colonists arrived, however, the status of the first Americans changed. A people who had travelled so far for religious freedom, and private ownership could not understand the American Indian’s belief in shared wealth of resources. The colonist’s arrival was the beginning of the end for the American Indians, not only because they were outnumbered by the new Americans, but because their way of life; rural or nomadic, became impossible as the free range land was converted into private ownership plot.

In paintings and in print, European artists had so romanticized the American Indian as the ‘noble savage’, part of the glamorous frontier wilderness of an unknown America, that first the conquerors, then the colonists came to tame both wilderness and savage. The American Indian was the last ‘wild man’; America, the last frontier. At the same time that adventurer’s were writing autobiographies dictated by American Indian chiefs, collecting artifacts for the first museums, painting portraits of American Indians in their native habitat, the American Indians were being moved further and further out of the way of the colonists.

Extremism of any kind, be it radicalization or romanticization is evidence of an ignorance which precludes understanding, and historical record of the ongoing relationship of the white man and the red is rife with stories of misinterpretation and misunderstanding. The adventurer's writing autobiographies dictated by American Indian chiefs have been replaced by American Indians writing their own stories. Some of those collecting artifacts for museums are American Indian anthropologists, and those painting portraits are
American Indians. In paintings and in print, American Indians are now telling their own stories. D'Arcy McNickle was one of the first. It is important to tell about the time when others wrote the laws and recorded the history of the American Indian because the laws have not changed.

When the Constitution was sent to the states for ratification in 1787, representatives began to notice that it did not list individual rights. A number of states insisted that a 'Bill of Rights' be added to the Constitution which described personal freedoms considered sacred and basic to life. Ten amendments were ratified and added to the Constitution in 1791. The First Amendment is indicative of what guaranteed freedoms the colonists expected, yet did not respect in regard to the American Indian peoples.

Five of the amendments specifically concern the 'rights of the people'. Five others guarantee basic rights of criminal procedure against governmental oppression. The preamble of the Constitution begins with "We the people of the United States...", Would this include the Indians who signed over much of their lands to the United States? Would it include those Indians on reservations within the geopolitical boundaries of the United States? The Indians were not citizens of the United States and they were not aliens. The definition of Indian land title became the responsibility of the federal courts; which resulted in broad definition and multiple interpretation. Legislators and judges stipulated that Indians were unique in many legal ways. The question was not who would develop law, but who would define the nature of the relationship between the expanding United States of America and the Indian tribes occupying the interior of the continent.

The result of this period of legal confusion and constitutional development
caused by geographical expansion was the development of the U.S. theory of aboriginal title. In 1823, Chief Justice John Marshall defined the doctrine of aboriginal possession which would characterize American domestic law. He characterized the Indian tribes as 'domestic dependent nations' which acknowledged them as sovereign nations, and made the United States responsible for protecting Indian rights from the challenges of foreign governments, states, and private citizens. However this trusteeship would be interpreted, the United States had an obligation to the Indian; and the power to regulate all Indian affairs.

The Supreme Court began to interpret laws that created a new kind of legal life for Indians in the American legal system. Much of Federal Indian law was developed by non-Indians, and granted them no authoritative or representative voice. Any appeal or redress of grievances could only be made within the boundaries of American law itself. This compromised tribal sovereignty. There was increased demand from the states, and from Congress itself, to ignore tribal territorial claims and force the Indians from their lands. When the Indian ceased being an Indian, by renouncement of his tribal status, then the rights promised to him in the Bill of Rights, which were originated by the 'discoverer', would apply to him. The strategy used by the federal government in relationship with the American Indians became one of assimilation.

At the beginning of the 19th century, American policy became official recognition of the American Indians as resident foreign nations. An attempt at geographic separation of the colonists and the Indians, and an attempt to negotiate with the Indians for expedient acquisition of their excess lands was priority. The concept of 'resident foreign nations' was
used as a means of distinguishing tribes from member states of the Union. The fact that
the United States entered into treaties with Indian tribes gave these tribes a unique
position within the American system. Although the treaties were primarily instruments of
land transfer, the legal device by which the United States sought to achieve its primary
policy objective of 'expansion with honor', they also gave evidence of cooperation on the
part of American Indians with this American policy.

For almost one hundred years, until 1871, Congressional policy pertaining to
American Indians was limited to legislation of statutes in regard to treaty provisions. The
nation had continued to grow. Colonial settlement previous to official American territorial
acquisition did not affect the Indians nearly as much as when states joined the union. With
increased demand from the states, and from Congress itself, the Supreme Court began to
interpret laws that created a new kind of legal life for Indians in the American legal
system. The General Allotment Act, also called the Dawes Act, passed by Congress in
1887, authorized the President of the United States to divide an Indian reservation into
individual holdings, assigning a parcel of land to each tribal member, and selling the
'surplus' land to homesteaders at $2.50 per acre. Some ninety million acres were sold
between 1887 and 1930. "In every case where allotment was carried out, the Indian tribe
objected; and in most cases the lands were covered by treaties in which the United States
obligated itself to protect the tribe in its right of possession....it would not have occurred
to any...to inquire of the Indians what ideas they had of home, of family, and of property."2
By 1890, the federal census determined that the frontier no longer existed. By this time,
also, according to federal census figures, the American Indian population had reached a
low point, numbering less than 250,000 persons.

In 1892-97 the federal government had withdrawn support from church schools in favor of boarding schools. "Indian children were sent away from home, to grow to maturity in alien boarding schools. The ceremonies of the people were ridiculed or forbidden entirely." The federal government outlawed not only religious ceremonies such as the sun dance among the plains Indians, but also the habits of custom; in 1910, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs prohibited wearing of long hair by male Indians. "The whites were always trying to make the Indians give up their life and live like white men--go to farming, work hard and do as they did--and the Indians did not know how to do that, and did not want to anyway....If the Indians had tried to make the whites live like them, the whites would have resisted, and it was the same way with many Indians."

While the federal government sought to regulate the American Indian peoples, the scribes of the early 19th century continued to remain undecided about the place of the American Indian peoples in the society or in the history of the new nation. On the one hand, legislation had come to define and to determine the life of the American Indian through a relationship of control and limitation. While on the other, sincere efforts were being made to record for posterity, the 'native' cultures which were being so quickly overcome.

The American Indians became the 'other', subjects to observe, with customs to study and to record. The question of whether the Indians were an aboriginal race or had migrated from elsewhere arose early and persisted long in American anthropological literature. For many men of the 18th century, it became a problem of faith. Where did the
Indians fit in God's scheme of Creation? Anthropologists of the 19th century seemed always to have started out as something else, geologists or entomologists or soldiers stranded in the wilderness at the close of frontier wars. "Year after year, interrupted briefly by the First World War, field parties explored and excavated and published reports...To live among them and to become knowledgeable about their ways of life seemed to answer...need for a focal point around which to organize...energies."\(^5\)

Yet, if it could be said that ignorance precludes understanding, the error was made by both 'red' and 'white' peoples. While the 'white' sought a solution in containment, and acquisition of knowledge only of an isolated other, the American Indian sought for place, for identity, for voice. The case of Ishi, the last Yahi Indian is representative of the relationship between American Indian peoples and the others at this time.

Ishi was a member of the 'Mill Creek' or Yahi Indians of Tehama County in northern California; an entire tribe which had been erased in a series of raids by white settlers when it was still lawful to hunt and kill Indians. When he 'gave himself up' in 1911, his appearance caused a sensation, and newspapers referred to him as the 'last wild Indian of North America'. He was placed by federal officials under the care and protection of the Department of Anthropology of the University of California, and Ishi became a celebrity.

He spent the remaining five years of his life living in a museum. As written by his anthropologist friends in much subsequent publication, when asked if he would like to live somewhere other than the museum, Ishi indicated that he would not. Unsaid or under said by these same authors was the fact that Ishi, indeed, had nowhere else to go. His tribe had
been erased, the land confiscated. The only alternative for him would have been to go to live on land designated as reservation, assigned to those of another culture, language, tradition. Ishi remained at the museum among ‘friends’ who never understood his language, or shared his belief despite continued efforts to communicate.

Ishi provided a wealth of information which contributed to anthropological and historical record, but to no increased understanding between red and white, as illustrated by what was published in the Chico Record, March 28, 1916, at the time of his death.

"Ishi, the man primeval, is dead.... He furnished amusement and study to the savants at the University of California for a number of years, and doubtless much of ancient Indian lore was learned from him, but we do not believe he was the marvel that the professors would have the public believe. He was just a starved-out Indian from the wilds of Deer creek who, by hiding in its fastnesses, was able to long escape the white man's pursuit. And the white man with his food and clothing and shelter finally killed the Indian just as effectually as he would have killed him with a rifle." 6

Ishi was not the last. An American Indian man had already been born who would also make a place for himself in a museum, some sixty years later, and on the opposite side of America. Unlike Ishi, who 'furnished amusement and study'; whose voice was recorded but whose role remained exhibition; D'Arcy McNickle, anthropologist, and author, would have an active voice. He would be one of those who planned the study of the American Indian people. D'Arcy McNickle, activist and leader of the Pan-Indian Movement would see that Ishi was not the last.
To have been born an Indian on an Indian Reservation is to have been half-born. Rather, it is to have come to live in a world of mist. Always you are waiting, the people around you are waiting.

D'Arcy McNickle, "En roulant ma boule, roulant..." 7

The misunderstanding that precluded acceptance of the American Indian peoples by others, contributed to apprehension on the part of the American Indian regarding his own place in a society whose ground was forever shifting beneath his feet. It was into such a society of mixed messages about identity, and question of historical place in what had become a quicksand of record so much becoming ascribed by others, that American Indians feared their own voice was fading, that one man, who was to become the first of many to make a difference, was born.

"When I look back upon those days--days of infinite promise and steady adventure and the certain sanctity of childhood--I see how much was there in the balance. The past and the future were simply the large contingencies of a given moment; they bore upon the present and gave it shape. One does not pass through time, but time enters upon him, in his place. As a child, I knew this surely, as a matter of fact; I am not wise to doubt it now. Notions of the past and future are essentially notions of the present. In the same way an idea of one's ancestry and posterity is really an ideal of the self." 8

The Salish (Okinagan, salst meaning people) are a large and powerful division of the Salishan family, to which they gave their name, living in much of western Montana and centering around Flathead Lake and Valley. A more popular designation for this tribe is Flathead, given to them by the surrounding people, not because they artificially deformed
their heads but because, in contrast to most tribes farther west, they left them in their natural condition, flat on top.

The Kootenai are a distinct language group who inhabit parts of southeast British Columbia and northern Montana and Idaho, from the lakes near the source of the Columbia River to Pend d'Oreille Lake. Their legends and traditions indicate that they were driven westward by Siksika, their hereditary enemies. Before the buffalo disappeared from the plains from overhunting and destruction by non-Indians, they often had joint hunting expeditions with the Salish. The Salish, with the related Pend d'Oreille and Kootenai, ceded their lands in Montana and Idaho to the United States by the treaty of Hell Gate, Montana, on July 16, 1855. They also joined in the peace treaty signed at the mouth of Judith River, Montana, on October 17, 1855. Non-whites would begin to settle in the area with the coming of the transcontinental railroad in 1880. The country was still largely unpopulated in 1885. It was reported that there was 625 head of buffalo.

On January 18, 1904, at St. Ignatius in northwest Montana; William D'Arcy McNickle was born to William and Philomene McNickle, the youngest of three children, and the only son. The origin of the name 'D'Arcy' is uncertain; family tradition maintains that it was a place name in Canada. D'Arcy's maternal grandparents were from Canada. D'Arcy's father was Irish, and his mother, Me'tis Indian. William was 30, and working as an industrial teacher for the federal government boarding school for Indians at Jocko, Montana when he met and married Philomene Parenteau, 17, in 1899.

This was a union, perhaps, more of convenience than of love. According to Me'tis custom, Philomene's parents arranged the marriage. William may have wanted to
marry Philomene in anticipation of her land allotment, which was common practice at the time. William was a good marriage prospect; he owned property, was Catholic and not Indian. The ambitious Parenteau's, who had come to the reservation from Saskatchewan after the aborted Metis uprising in 1885, did not consider themselves to be Indian at this time when it was not especially advantageous to be so, and they did not want their daughter to marry an Indian.

On April 18, 1905, less than one year later, however, D'Arcy McNickle, his two sisters, and his mother were enrolled as members of the Flathead Indian Tribe. Their blood affiliation was listed as Cree (not Me'tis, which was a Canadian Indian tribe). The Dawes Act, passed by Congress in 1887, provided for the individual allotment of reservation land to tribal members with the hope that through the ownership of private property, Indians might become accustomed to the advantages and responsibilities of American citizenship. As part of the terms of this Act, the Tribal Council, those who governed the tribe, were allowed to recognize and adopt those persons who had resided on reservation land for more than ten years.

Although they were not members of the Flathead Indian Tribe, Philomene's family had lived on the reservation for many years, and were well known and accepted. It was D'Arcy's Irish father, William who petitioned the Tribal Council to enroll his family. With tribal enrollment, Philomene and the children became eligible to receive allotments of reservation land. William made sure that the 80 acre parcel received was adjacent to the land which he already owned and farmed. Claiming Indian blood or affiliation may have been more a matter of convenience for the McNickle family at this time.
The family may have lived on what was allotted to them as adopted members of an Indian tribe, but William and Philomene had no intention of raising their children to be Indian. The McNickle children, D'Arcy, and his sisters, Ruth Elizabeth, (four-years older) and Florence Lea (three years older) would attend the mission boarding school in St. Ignatius, south of Jocko for most of their formative years. Although the children were listed as being mixed-blood on the school rolls, their parents discouraged them from playing with the Indian children who were their schoolmates, and so much part of their daily life. Identification with white society was preferable to that of the Indian, who was caught in a cycle of despair and poverty that characterized early twentieth century reservation life. Many years later, in a letter to friend, Karen Fenton, D'Arcy would write, "My recollection of that period in my own life is that we knew so little and tried to ignore what we did not know, since it was not a source of pride....As 'breeds' we could not turn for reassurance to an Indian tradition, and certainly not to the white community." 9

When they were home on school holidays and during the summer, the McNickle children would play together out of doors, most often to escape the shouting. D'Arcy and his sister, Florence were especially close, spending much of their time fishing. The increasing tension in their parent's relationship did not go unnoticed by the children. Even many years later, D'Arcy recalled, "I was too young to know what was going on between my parents, although I was aware of a great deal of mud-slinging both ways." 10 He may have been too young to understand, but he did remember. D'Arcy, would marry three times, and never seemed comfortable in intimate relationships. He often wrote in his journal about his discomfort, "We have not been exactly conjuvial these past few days.
Where is the difficulty? How deeply is it set?"11 and about his belief in the importance of caution. "Rather than shunning or flying from an increasing complexity as, for example, one's nature...one should enter more freely into it, welcome it, keeping always a spirit of detachment of casualness once you love that you sink under and are lost."12 William and Philomene separated in 1912. This was the end of family life for the McNickle children. The following years would bring additional separation and not only geographical estrangement. D'Arcy McNickle was eight years old.

The litigation began. Philomene appealed to the Flathead agent, and legal authority, Major Fred Morgan, stating that it was unfair that William be allowed to use the children's land. She requested that her allotment and D'Arcy's, which William controlled, and had built a house on, be exchanged. Her request was denied. Divorce proceedings began in early 1913. The fight for custody was held behind closed doors, which suggested that one or both parties had seriously violated the rules of the tribal community. This may or may not have been true.

The climate in which the McNickles lived on the reservation was an especially tense one at the time. Father Louis Taelman, the Jesuit in charge of the St. Ignatius Mission, was concerned about the practice of concubinage; sleeping with someone other than one's spouse, that he interpreted as having become an epidemic on the reservation. He had written to the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) demanding that federal Indian agent, W.H. Smead be replaced by someone who would act to stop such immorality. Major Fred Morgan, soon promoted to Superintendent Morgan, had newly replaced Smead at the time of the McNickle's divorce hearings. He was especially alert to even rumor of scandal.
Both Philomene and William sought full custody of the children, and their land. It was true that Philomene's behavior was unpredictable, that she had developed a reputation for being unstable, she had threatened to kill her husband on one occasion and had actually left him more than once. When she admitted to having kept a hired man at the house, it was interpreted badly. While it was never determined whether or not she was guilty of any indiscretion, Philomene lost in her appeal for custody of the children.

The divorce decree ordered that D'Arcy would spend summer vacations with Philomene, Ruth would spend the summer with William, and Florence would divide her vacation between their parents. The children would continue to attend the mission school in St. Ignatius, if it was willing to have them. Neither parent would have custody during the school year, but they did have visiting privileges. In "Going To School", one of the first short stories that D’Arcy wrote, perhaps he depicts memories of his parents relationship: "His father and mother spent all their time making life unpleasant for each other. Every night...they were at it. He lived his life on the road to school; the night was only spent in waiting for another day..." And even some sixty years later, D'Arcy would recall that "...it was a hell of a society to grow up in."

The Flathead reservation was chaotic at that time, not only because of missionary interference. There were inter-tribal disputes over land allotment, and the land not allotted to the Indians was being sold to white homesteaders. D'Arcy would always remember this. He would describe to friends how after homesteading, the range was fenced, and the local people were forced to sell their herds because they could no longer support them on the land allotted to their families. The buffalo could not be kept off the homesteader's
lands and those that were not killed were shipped to Canada to be raised for slaughter.

For the Native American, it was the beginning of the end of all tribal cohesiveness as it had been known. Tradition was being over-run. The McNickle family was one of many families divided, and except for occasional visits over the years, not even the children would be together again.

By the time that school opened in the fall of 1913, Philomene had remarried and stopped attending church. William decided she was a poor influence on the children. Superintendent Morgan agreed. It is quite possible that Superintendent Morgan convinced Father George de la Motte, Mission Superior at the St. Ignatius school, to refuse admission to the McNickle children. All three children were enrolled at the Salem Indian training School in Chemawa, Oregon. Boarding school. D'Arcy and his sisters lived in separate dormitories, and their parents were far away.

American Indians 'Traditional' Education

...the men who came out of Europe into what they pleased to call the New World were men with a mission. The mission might be secondary to the immediate needs of security, but it was never wholly absent and at times it was of dominating interest in the actions of individual settlers. The nature of the mission was variously phrased, but essentially it amounted to an unremitting effort to make Europeans out of the New World inhabitants, in social practices and in value concepts.

D'Arcy McNickle "Indian and European: Indian-White Relations from Discovery to 1887"¹⁵

D'Arcy McNickle was a baptized Catholic and an enrolled Flathead Indian. His formal education had begun at St. Ignatius, a Jesuit mission school on the reservation, and
would continue at the off-reservation Indian boarding school at Chemawa. At the age of 12, D'Arcy would transfer from Indian boarding school to a public school, and would transfer again, to a high school with very few Indians. The education he received beyond high school would be characterized by study interrupted, often due to monetary difficulties. He would go to school as much as he was able, and wherever he happened to be. This included study at the University of Montana, Oxford, Grenoble, and Columbia Universities. D'Arcy McNickle would never complete a graduate degree, but if the national goal at that time had been to habituate the American Indian to be a lifelong learner, D'Arcy McNickle would have been considered a success. The purpose of schooling for American Indians was assimilation and enculturation. D'Arcy McNickle was a failure. He remained an individual.

In the first Charter of Virginia (1606) the colony was assigned the task of "propagating of Christian Religion to such People, as yet live in Darkness and miserable ignorance of the true Knowledge and worship of God....in time bring the Infidels and Savages living to those Parts, to human civility, and to a settled and quiet Government." At first, Christianization and civilization of the American Indians became the responsibility of the missionaries. Unlike the more tolerant and adaptive Jesuit missionaries in French North America, almost all missionary efforts in the colonies were Protestant; missionaries whose practices were intended for absolute deculturation and enculturation.

From 1730 to 1760, New England and the Middle Colonies experimented in schooling American Indians. Most common were schools such as Eleazar Wheelock's, (founder of Dartmouth College) Moor's Charity School, founded in Lebanon Connecticut,
Almost ninety children, boys and girls, attended this school, and many would go on to become cultural brokers, carrying new learning back to their own peoples.

After such education, the children did return to their home and to their tribe changed. Conassatego, of the Iroquois League, acknowledged this in reply to an offer of the Virginia Legislature to the Six Nations inviting them to send six youths to be educated at the College of William and Mary, Williamsburg (1744).

We know you highly esteem the kind of Learning taught in these Colleges, and the maintenance of our young Men, while with you, would be very expensive to you. We are convinced, therefore, that you mean to do us Good by your Proposal; and we thank you heartily. But you who are so wise must know that different nations have different Conceptions of things; and you will not therefore take it amiss, if our ideas of this kind of Education happens not to be the same with yours. We have had some experience of it. Several of our young People were formerly brought up in the Colleges of the Northern Provinces; they were instructed in all your Sciences; but when they came back to us, they were bad Runners, ignorant of every means of living in the Woods, unable to bear either cold or Hunger, knew neither how to build a Cabin, take a deer, or kill imperfectly, were therefore neither fit for Hunters, Warriors, nor Counsellors; they were totally good for nothing. We are however not the less obliged for your kind Offer, tho' we decline accepting it and to show our grateful Sense of it, if the Gentlemen of Virginia shall send us a Dozen of their Sons, we will take care of their Education, instruct them in all we know, and make Men of them. 17

But by the time of the American Revolution, 'education' had failed to turn American Indian children into English adults.

Colonial educational experiments established many of the patterns of schooling followed in the nineteenth, and into the twentieth centuries. The belief persisted that schooling was the most effective means of Christianization, and enculturation, that the combination of physical labor with religious and secular instruction appropriate to separate sexes was most effective methodology. It was believed necessary to remove American
Indian children from the corrupting influence of kin and culture, returning them only when they were sufficiently educated to be above the temptation of returning to their 'Indian' belief and practice. During the first hundred years of our national history, American Indians education was in the hands of the religious associations.

Since 1789, the War Department had official responsibility for American Indians' affairs. In 1824, a special unit within the department, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, (BIA) was established, and transferred to the new Department of the Interior in 1849. During this period, the schooling of American Indians was characterized by close cooperation between the federal government and the churches. The new American's belief in the redemptive power of schooling, combined with the national priority of taming the savage "to human civility and to a settled and quiet Government"18, perhaps, makes this understandable.

In 1810, the first American foreign missionary society was founded, the American Board for Commissioners for Foreign Missions, (ABCFM). The goal of these schools was to erase tribal cultures. The various curricula totally excluded Indian cultural knowledge, and generally fell into the 'half-and-half pattern; half of the curriculum comprised common school academic subjects, the English language, arithmetic, history, geography, and the religion of the denomination running the school, and the other half, required physical labor appropriate to the 'proper' gender roles without regard to tribal livelihood. Boys learned woodworking, and blacksmithing, although some came from tribes which practiced agriculture. Girls learned cooking, dressmaking and other domestic arts.
In 1819, the 'civilization fund' became law, providing funds for the civilization of the Indian tribes adjoining the frontier settlements. Every year, the president could spend $10,000 to employ "capable persons of good moral character, to instruct them (Indians) in the mode of agriculture suited to their situation; and for teaching their children in reading, writing, and arithmetic." William McNickle, D'Arcy's father, was employed to teach at such a school in Jocko. The McNickle children spent their early years at St. Ignatius. Federal authorities chose to increasingly subsidize the educational work of the religious groups until the late nineteenth century, when they would begin to erect and staff government schools and to develop an educational system. Although the government had assumed responsibility from the missionaries for American Indians' education, the goal of assimilation remained.

Established in 1880, the Chemawa (Salem) Indian School, in Chemawa, Oregon, was the second oldest off-reservation boarding school established by the federal government. It was believed to be one of the 'better' schools. Since all of the schools were designed to enculturate the American Indians without exception, 'better' may have meant less strict, which is doubtful, that being against current educational philosophy in this regard. However, Superintendent Morgan's first choice of school assignment for the McNickle children had been the Haskell Institute, in Lawrence, Kansas; a school whose reputation was notoriously militaristic, and whose former superintendent, C. Robinson, represented prevalent administrative sentiment when he referred to even the best of the students as "swine" in danger of returning to "wallowing filth and barbarism" at home, once they left the strict confines of the school. The Haskell Institute refused to take all
three children. William McNickle refused to have them separated.

Educational policy was based upon the assumption that the American Indians did not educate their children. Although early autobiographies of American Indians often record romanticized versions of traditional upbringing, there is much evidence of education being serious business. "I believe many people will be surprised, when told that Indian parents realized just as much responsibility for training their young as any other race of people." Education was an intense and lifelong affair for the American Indian peoples.

"Manhood was thus planned in babyhood....When the days of age and weakness came to the strong and active, there would have to be those to take their places...." American Indian children heard traditional stories, and learned custom, and were taught survival skills by grandparents, aunts and uncles, through the process of observation and imitation. Boys and girls were often separated for learning what was of particular importance to their gender association within the tribe.

Criticism was always followed by praise. Praise was hard-earned. Punishment was not arbitrary, but the natural consequence of unwise or unacceptable behavior. "...a man living in his tribe without respect was a living nonentity." "It was only by the performance of valorous deeds that men won honors in the tribe; but this man had no ambitions to win such honors. As a hunter he was also a total failure, consequently his worldly possessions were not such as could give him distinction." To make the children strong, physical tests of strength and endurance were common practice.

What American Indian children learned at home prepared them for the boarding
school experience, and it did not. While they were accustomed to being educated by many others in addition to, or instead of their parents, and to being separated by gender, they were not accustomed to being 'alone', away from the tribe, all family and friends. While they were willing to work hard for respect, they did not understand demands made upon them with no reasonable explanation. While they expected and endured physical deprivation as opportunity to build strong character, they did not understand the new American's concept of character building; enforced competition, often, arbitrary punishment, and silent expectation, avoidance of affection, and the well-earned praise; which was much valued, and important motivation for the American Indian child.

American Indians response to those who attempted to assimilate them through the efforts of education is a story of adaptation and manipulation, rarely of serious compromise.

But the cycle was broken. The telling and learning that went on between the generations of American Indians whose oral traditions and language held them together was breaking apart. The ancestral voices were fading. The children were being sent away to school where they would forget the language, and the stories. On the eve of his departure for boarding school, an Apache boy told his father: "I'm going to see my grandmother before I go off to school. It might be the last time I'll see her." Strangers replaced the people as teachers. Isolation was the key. "Indian boarding schools emphasized 'military discipline and the complete regimentation of the child's waking hours. Moreover, the schools were dedicated to the complete eradication of all traits of Indian culture." While the federal government sought to enculturate American Indians, some tribute was paid to the culture being lost. The 'Buffalo Head' nickel was issued in 1913,
with composite portrait of three Indian chiefs, a Cheyenne, a Seneca, and a Sioux, on one side, and a buffalo on the reverse side

During this period, 1914-1917, (the first time in fifty years that Indian births exceeded Indian deaths) many American Indians would leave the reservations. Many would not return, and none would return the same. Young men not many years older that D'Arcy McNickle, some 10,000 American Indians, would leave home to enlist, to fight and some to die in World War I. Those too young to go off to war, went off to school.

Echoes of Those Educated

Major Miles was a man of conscience. Whatever he did, he did earnestly....These children were about to go out from the Reservation and get a new start. Life would change. They ought to realize it somehow--'Boys--and girls--'...It was time to say something....he would have to make the moment real....'Boys and girls--'...The train whistled, dully, but unmistakably. Then it repeated more clearly. The rails came to life, something was running through them and making them sing....I'm going to help you. I'll see that the old folks are taken care of, so you won't have to think about them....Don't worry about them. Just think about yourself and what I'm going to do for you....I'm going to send you away. How do you like that?' The Major smiled at his own happy idea. There was silence. No shy smiling, no look of gratitude, only silence....The moment was important. 'Boys and girls--' The train was pounding near. Already it had emerged from the canyon and momentarily the headlong flying locomotive loomed blacker and larger. A white plume flew upward--Whoo-oo, whoo-oo....The Major realized in sudden remorse that he had waited too long. The vital moment had come, and he had paused, looked for words, and lost it. The roar of rolling steel was upon them. Lifting his voice in desperate haste,...he bellowed: 'Boys and girls--be good--.' That was all anyone heard.

D'Arcy McNickle, Train Time

Helen L. Peterson, a friend of D'Arcy McNickle remembered D'Arcy saying that
"he entered school when he was eleven years old, wearing long hair in the Indian tradition, and speaking no English" (probably, he spoke French)²⁸ For American Indian children, those who had come from oral cultures, trained in careful observation and vivid recall, the memories remain vivid of arrival and first impression of the schools. The children must have been overwhelmed by the sensory impression, evidenced by their graphic description of the experience, even many years later.

Entering the house, I stood close against the wall, ...The strong glaring light in the whitewashed room dazzled my eyes. The noisy hurrying of hard shoes upon a bare wooded floor increased the whirring in my ears. My only safety seemed to be in keeping next to the wall....As I was wondering in which direction to escape from all this confusion,...two warm hands grasped me firmly, and in the same moment I was tossed high in midair....the strange welcome continued: she jumped me up and down with increasing enthusiasm. My mother had never made a play-thing of her wee daughter. Remembering this I began to cry aloud.²⁹

...and I began to disrobe like the rest. Off came my blue serge skirt and blouse; then my Sunday lingerie, which I was so proud of. Mother had spent time making...with a lot of embroidery...I was hoping everyone would see how elegant they were. A bundle was tossed at me and someone shouted 'Put those on!'³⁰

I remember being dragged out, though I resisted by kicking and scratching wildly. In spite of myself; I was carried downstairs and tied fast in a chair. I cried aloud, shaking my head all the while, until I felt the cold blades of the scissors against my neck, and heard them gnaw off one of my thick braids. Then I lost my spirit.³¹

I'll never forget it as long as I live....There was nobody to say goodnight to me....And I remember I cried all night. And oh, I was never so lonesome, and although there were probably two hundred children there in the same dormitory with me, I felt like I was all alone.³²

The fact that the children were accustomed to being educated by those other than their parents, did not prepare the McNickle children any better for the experience.

Although Philomene and William maintained close contact with the children, changing schools at this time of familial turmoil was compounded by the trauma of the experience of schooling itself. "Indian boys and girls went to the school of life and in it learned from the
taskmaster of Experience how to live...In this school of nature play was the important thing. The young played the game of life, and gradually moved from play to reality."

The well-defined, organized structured environment in which D'Arcy and his sisters were formally schooled did not allow much time for play. Much different than the freedom that they had been accustomed to during the summer and on school holidays, the McNickles faced a rigorous schedule, probably similar to what is described by Basil H. Johnston, a former student of a similar school.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6:15</td>
<td>Rise</td>
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<tr>
<td>6:45 - 7:25</td>
<td>Mass</td>
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<tr>
<td>7:30 - 8:00</td>
<td>Breakfast</td>
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<tr>
<td>8:05 - 8:55</td>
<td>Work</td>
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<td>9:00 - 11:55</td>
<td>Class/work</td>
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<tr>
<td>12:00 - 12:25</td>
<td>Dinner</td>
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<td>12:30 - 1:10</td>
<td>Sports/games/rehearsal</td>
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<td>1:15 - 4:15</td>
<td>Class/work</td>
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<td>4:15 - 4:30</td>
<td>Collation</td>
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<td>4:30 - 4:55</td>
<td>Work/chores</td>
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<td>5:00 - 5:55</td>
<td>Study</td>
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<tr>
<td>6:00 - 6:25</td>
<td>Supper</td>
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<tr>
<td>6:30 - 7:25</td>
<td>Sports/games/rehearsal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:30 - 10:00</td>
<td>Study and prepare for bed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Indian schools were designed to remove Indian children from their tribal cultures and teach them to become 'civilized' American citizens. These were primarily vocational training schools, with small attention paid to academics. "Four areas of teaching were stressed: English, reading and writing, and trades (carpentry or farming for the boys and house-keeping for the girls)....The line generally taken by the instructors was that Indian culture was inferior...'not a word of Indian is heard from our boys after six months.' This was achieved through strict discipline and rigorous punishment. Punishment was given
every night at seven to those who broke any of the rules." And at home, 'punishment' was much different than it was at school. "Whenever I done something wrong, my father would never hit me. He would never hit a child. He said it jes wasn't right. But he would just talk to me. Sometimes I wisht he'd just of hit me. I hated it when he had to talk to me." "...That is how our people always talk to their children, so low and quiet, the child thinks he is dreaming. But he never forgets." While at school, "The assistant disciplinarian...led him to the basement: two strong boys let down my pants and held me. After about fifteen blows with a rawhide in a heavy hand, I broke down and cried. I slept very little that night and was sore for several days." The students had no choice but to obey, but they did 'fight' back in subtle protest to the proscribed 'right' way; by being late, by being slow to obey; by being silent. "6:45 A.M. Clang! Clang! Clang! Boys shuffled into lines as slowly as they dared without having their names inscribed in the prefects' little black books. It would have been easier to line up immediately without waiting for the bell, but that would have been seen as surrender." The students formed friendships, a support system in play and in rebellion. This comraderie in such a community, was perhaps, the only source of strength and consolation in an otherwise dismal and rigorous routine so alien. If the teachers control was by intimidation, theirs was a resistance successful enough to contribute to the frustration and anger of those in charge, and to the making of some ironic memories of creative escapades.

Much was later written by those who shared the experience. Autobiographies of those American Indians who shared such experience remain overwhelmingly ambivalent.
Hostile encounters, unfair treatment, uncomfortable conditions were accepted and made the best of. American Indian children sent away to school triumphed because of their accommodation, by doing what they had to do, learning what they could learn. Most describe receiving a good and necessary education, a closed chapter of their life experience from which they've moved on with no traumatized memory or self-aggrandizement.

D'Arcy records no such memories, and indeed, may have recalled none. Perhaps, unaccustomed to making friends; always having been discouraged from doing so by their parents, and then, perhaps, finding it difficult coming to a new school in the middle years to encounter those already firm friends, the McNickle children may have easily played the part of outsider. D'Arcy, Ruth and Florence McNickle may have had an especially lonely time of it at Chemawa.

The school at Chemawa was considered one of the better off-reservation boarding schools. In D'Arcy's writing, there is nothing to indicate that it was much different than the mission school at St. Ignatius. McNickle did not talk about the three years he spent there, but he did write about it. In his first novel, *The Surrounded*, he described the lead character, Archilde as just a boy among many boys at school, with experiences common to boys everywhere. In a later novel, *Wind From An Enemy Sky*, he wrote about Antoine, the young hero, who returns after being four years away at school, and describes the brutality of the school administration, and the atmosphere of fear felt by all of the students. As historian, D'Arcy impersonally describes Indian boarding schools as places where children are denied access to their cultural heritage, and are punished for
speaking their native language. At these schools, the Indian children became accustomed to regimentation, and developed strong alliances in reaction to it. While D'Arcy's own lack of interest in competition, refusal to participate in one-upmanship, and nondirective relationship style, were traits shared by the other American Indian students, he may have remained shy, and was always independent. While all of the McNickle children did well in school, there is no record of special friendships.

Looking Forward-Looking Back: Lessons learned

The boy stood...a boy not yet full grown. But he was all right....An inch or two more of growth and he would be a man for anybody's measure....

D'Arcy McNickle, “En roulant ma boule, roulant...”

In later years, Florence told her children that the school she had attended was a very good school, and she had enjoyed it. She never told them that it was a boarding school for Indian children. In his fiction, D'Arcy seldom made direct reference to schooling, included no details or incidents in his stories. However, the experience of schooling, characterized by its inevitable presence, and profound influence, always played important part in his stories.

In McNickle's first novel, The Surrounded, the boarding school experience of central character, Archilde is never directly described, yet it plays a large part in his physical and spiritual alienation from family and tribe, the result of which determines much of the story. Published in 1936, almost thirty years after D'Arcy's tenure at Chemawa,
could this have been a reflection of D'Arcy's own unspoken feelings about that time of his life? Schooling may be an experience unspoken, but nevertheless, a powerful force for change.

In Runner in the Sun: A Story of Indian Maize, McNickle's second novel, published in 1954, any mention of formal schooling is conspicuous by its absence; the story describes pre-Hispanic Indian life in the Southwest, before the BIA, before boarding schools. Although the tribe that D'Arcy describes is fictional, much information is based upon anthropological fact. The story is about Salt, who must find a way to save the members of his tribe from starvation, and extinction. Salt faced an unknown enemy, overcame natural, understandable obstacles, and triumphed. The life lessons he learned were hard but necessary; what he learned made him a man, and a hero. This story has been described as powerful in its simplicity, and direct message; the hero, the challenge, the journey, the triumph-- all of the elements of good storytelling are here.

Like Salt, all central characters in D'Arcy McNickle's fiction faced an unknown enemy, and overcame obstacles, but only in his second novel, did D'Arcy McNickle look back to the past, when the central character, of simple name, could become a hero. More typical was Archilde, who faced an unknown enemy which he was charged to overcome-himself; one alienated, confused, and in search of 'something', himself? The experience of formal schooling did more than cause problems and cloud thinking. In McNickle's third novel, Wind From An Enemy Sky, he writes such strong indictment of the institution, that it is obvious that memories of powerful impact remain fresh. This, some fifty two years after D'Arcy left Chemawa. Where formerly, he had written one sentence, maybe two, he
writes five pages describing boarding school experience.

It was uncertain territory,...They had loud voices. They pointed at you. They held your head and made you look them in the face. They could lock you up in a room and leave you by yourself. He had already lived among such people and knew the fear that could snatch the breath away....'You students, now, you listen to me. I want you to appreciate what we're doing for you. We're taking you out of that filth and ignorance, lice in your heads, all that, the way you lived before you came here, and we're going to fix you up clean and polite so no man will be ashamed to have you in his home. Forget where you came from, what you were before; let all of that go out of your minds and listen only to what your teachers tell you.' He couldn't remember all the words, but that was the meaning of it. The students came from many miles away and from many tribes, all snatched up the way coyote pups are grabbed and stuffed into a sack while mother coyote sits on her haunches and licks her black nose.41

D'Arcy was his mother's favorite and shared an especially close relationship with her. He may have felt abandoned when he was sent away to Indian boarding school.

"They stayed together as much as they could when they first arrived, the students from each region or tribe favoring each other. When the strangeness wore off and they learned they were all Indians, wherever they came from, they found ways to work together against the common enemy....they had no desire to forget where they came from...."42

D'Arcy McNickle would never speak of it, but he would never forget his boarding school experience.

**Relationships Remembered: Moving on**

He wondered how it was that silence sat so easily with these people, while it produced such churning in him. He could not know. But he could guess that there was in them an overpowering sense of continuity, of things coming to them whole-made out of the past, against which their wills and their emotions never warred.
While he, split from the past, felt the silence as a burden that strained muscle and nerve. He labored over each passing moment.

D'Arcy McNickle, *Snowfall*43

In an effort to keep her children, Philomene had written to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in Washington, D.C. that she had tried to "raise (D'Arcy) as a white man, and fit him for a better lot in life, than the common Indian."44

In the novel, *Wind From An Enemy Sky*, Antoine's school experience becomes tragic when,

In spite of their seeming endlessness, the days at school did come to an end....'Now you'll catch it! They want you in the office.'...Antoine was so stricken that he seemed to crawl over the ground, and stood at last in the disciplinarian's office....The man rose up from behind the desk until he towered like a tree, a darkness against the light, and a moment later one arm of the big man was around the boy's shoulders and he was talking like a loving father: 'My boy, it grieves me to tell you the news-...I want you to realize that I'm your friend today, not just a school official....I want you to be brave ...My boy, your mother has died. We just received the word. We have been asked to send you home, and while we are reluctant to do this-you have been with us just over four years' ...Antoine heard none of it, only that he was going home-and that his mother would not be there....So he came home....and everyone told him she had never gotten over his going away....45

D'Arcy may have feared that he would be unable to return home until it was too late. He may have shared Philomene's sense of urgency.

D'Arcy was Philomene's favorite child, and she was especially upset about losing him. She sent him train fare so that he could come to visit her, and when it was time to return to school, she encouraged him to run away, which he did. (A frequent habit of boarding school students who would hitch rides by road, or jump freights.) It didn't work. Philomene did not give up so easily. She continued to petition the court for custody, and
to pressure the mission school in St. Ignatius to admit D'Arcy.

Her attempts to regain custody of D'Arcy resulted in a particularly painful court hearing when she brought D'Arcy to court with her and encouraged him to make accusations about the school food and the 'poor health' of his sister, Florence. D'Arcy was encouraged to make up outrageous lies. At his mother's urging, he even hinted that his roommate had 'improper relations' with his sister, Florence. None of D'Arcy's charges held up in court, and Philomene's appeal for custody was denied again.

Finally, three years later, in 1916, Philomene succeeded in gaining custody of her son. When he was 13, D'Arcy returned to Montana to live with his mother and her third husband. In a letter he would write to his sister Florence, D'Arcy would give her a full report of his activities.

Dear Sister,

I thought I would write to you again How are you?

Major said you could come home if you came with your mother but can't come with your father because he is a man and a man can't take good care of a girl and if you come home with your mother you won't have to go to school for at least two years, I am going to school at the public school it starts Sept, 9

I am shooting squirrels down for Molly and catching fish almost every day sometimes nine and sometimes 20 we killed two ducks yesterday for dinner if you come we will kill some more we had four little duck but something got two of them now we got only two cute little ones they come in the house and catch flies and bread crumbs

Robert Monroe was up here visiting last week and we are going to get Bland this week. Gus gave me two big ducks so I could raise some more and we got two rabbits.

Now be sure and write to Major, and tell him your sick and can't very well go to school and tell him you want to come home with your mother and tell him you
don't want to die in a unknown school like that. tell him your sister don't treat you right any way and just tell him what you think but don't be afraid to do it

I will close for this time.

Best regards from all.

Your Brother,
Darcy McNickle
St. Ignatius Montana

Florence and Ruth would remain at Chemawa another year. Florence would graduate from Chemawa in 1917, enroll in nursing school, obtain her nursing certification, and move to Canada. There, she would marry, raise four daughters and one son, and work in the nursing profession. Ruth would marry a mixed-blood Indian from St. Ignatius, and raise four children. When he left Chemawa, D'Arcy left his sisters behind. They would never have the close relationship of the past. He did remain close to his mother. He never forgot the ill treatment she received in the divorce. Philomene married three times. William never remarried. All records describe D'Arcy's father, William, as sober, hard-working and a good provider who genuinely cared for his children.

D'Arcy was fortunate in his mother's choice of husbands. When he returned to Montana in 1916, he would have little further contact with the people he had known on the reservation. He lived with Philomene and her third husband, Gus Dahlberg. D'Arcy got along so well with Gus that, although never formally adopted, he would use his name. D'Arcy Dahlberg would attend public school in Pablo, ten miles north of St. Ignatius, where the family lived for a short time. In 1918, when the family moved to Langley, Washington, where wartime shipbuilding offered more employment opportunities for Gus,
D'Arcy would attend a local high school in a community with very few Indians.

After high school, further education would be his own responsibility, and a continual challenge. Gus Dahlberg was an unskilled laborer who worked at whatever was available. The family income was augmented by tribal funds (from the sale of reservation timber and other tribal assets) paid to Philomene and D'Arcy, as members of the tribe. D'Arcy and his sister, Florence also received income from their allotments which were leased and farmed by their father. The income monies were kept in trust accounts at the Flathead Agency, to be drawn on as needed.

The Indian Bureau required that tribal members justify their withdrawals. D'Arcy's occasional letters to the agency office requesting funds provide the only information available about his high school years. Most of his withdrawals were for amounts of twenty-five or fifty dollars, primarily for clothing. He wrote that students in city schools dressed differently than students on the reservation. Later journal entries indicate that D'Arcy was always interested in having nice clothes, and would budget carefully for them. At this time, D'Arcy withdrew money for gifts for the family, and for music lessons.

Music lessons and sports had been the only 'play' allowed at Indian schools. D'Arcy had begun music lessons at Chemawa. He continued his study of the violin, buying his own instrument, and later paying for lessons and music. The correspondence between D'Arcy and Superintendent Theodore Sharp reveals the kind of man D'Arcy would become; independent, thoughtful, and eager to take advantage of every opportunity. He writes about playing a lead role in a school production of Shakespeare's
"Twelfth Night", performing on the debating team, and winning a prize in a short story competition. His coursework included: English, History (Ancient, Medieval, and Modern), Civics, Economics, Physics, Botany, General Science, Mathematics (Algebra, Plane & Solid Geometry), and Commercial (Bookkeeping, Law, & Geography).

In his short story, *Going to School* published in 1928, seven years after high school graduation, D'Arcy writes:

It was a strange business, this going to school. Out at home things went their humdrum way,...But in school it was different; they read about the capital of one State and the area of another; they learned about Nigeria and Liberia and Abyssinia and Lake Titicaca high in the mountains; they used words like 'hypotenuse' and 'congruent' in geometry; they found out that there had been a French Revolution and a War of the Spanish Succession and that Shakespeare had written many plays and was no doubt the greatest man in the world...He sat in his classroom and swallowed everything greedily. His head was full of things that had happened thousands of miles away and hundreds of years ago. But he knew better than to talk about them when he got home.47

So much wonder and amazement to share with no one in conversation. Perhaps, it continued to be a lonely time for D'Arcy McNickle. Distance had separated him from his family, and now, education.

**Looking Forward: An 'education' begun**

Practically all wisdom arises as a substitute for what a man would like, but dare not or is not able, to do.

D'Arcy McNickle, 20 March 1931, Journal entry.48
The kind of man that D'Arcy McNickle was becoming during this time of his life can best be surmised from letters and journal entries he made many years later. A profile of D'Arcy at age 16 would describe a shy young man; a 'loner'. He had been discouraged from 'mixing' with other Indian children both on the reservation, and at school. Although D'Arcy McNickle never returned to the reservation after he left in 1925, all of his writing, especially his fiction, is set on the reservation. In his novel, *Runner in the Sun*, D'Arcy remembers, and describes with vivid imagery:

The country which held this town was so broad and flat that the horizon seemed to lie at the end of the world. The soil underfoot was light gray in color, but so thickly was the land covered with pinion and juniper and dwarf oak that the distances looked black. It was high country, a land of little rain, where rocks turned black under the sun's intensity. At day's end, after heat had poured for long hours upon the parched earth, waves of blue haze rose against the horizon until earth and sky blurred and the tops of distant turret rocks seemed to float on empty space. The people living there sometimes called it the Enchanted Land. 49

He possessed a strong sense of place even if it was, perhaps, peopled by few friends. He possessed a strong sense of place even if it was, perhaps, peopled by few friends.

More than ten years later, in the journal he would keep, he writes about his painful shyness; his embarrassment at his own speechlessness was so great at one dinner party that he left the table abruptly, and fled the house. He hated formal meetings, and was unsure of himself with women. As a storyteller, the stories he would tell educated both American Indian readers, who were able to identify with what was written by reading about heroes and happenings from their own experience, and non-Indian readers, who
learned about American Indian experience. As an historian, his careful attention to detail would portray a comprehensive picture of the past which was fair to all sides.

D'Arcy McNickle sought knowledge and experience. His curiosity about others, about what there was to know, to see, to do burned inside him throughout his life. If he was shy, his genuine interest in other people made him a natural listener. In the same journal where he would record his embarrassment, he would include myriad detailed descriptions of people, scenery and conversation. Included would be quotes to remember, words defined, and poetry. His journal would reflect a lifelong learner. His writing would reflect a man who was thoughtful, and careful to see both sides of every one he encountered and wrote about in his journal, fiction or history. At age 16, it is possible that he did not realize his own skills and abilities.

The Dahlbergs moved back to Montana, and settled in Missoula. D'Arcy McNickle graduated from high school in 1921. That September, D'Arcy Dahlberg enrolled at Montana State University. He lived with Philomene and Gus until their divorce in 1924, when Philomene would move back to St. Ignatius. At age 20, D'Arcy McNickle was on his own. His letters to the agency would bear several different addresses after that, including one summer he spent in jail, when a misunderstanding with his landlady over some back rent owed led to his arrest. Within the context of a job application letter, some ten years later, he would explain what had happened:

In the Spring of 1924, at the end of my junior year, I left the University of Montana owing a board bill to my landlady, a Mrs. Rogers, of Missoula, Montana. The agreement was that I was to get a job and earn the money to repay her. I soon went to work for Mr. Joseph Grenier at St. Ignatius, Montana, and was still in his employ when, sometime in the early summer, Mrs. Rogers took action against me and had
me arrested. I was taken to Missoula and after several days was given a hearing. The case was at once dismissed and I went back to work....The episode has always struck me as having been a stupid one and I regret that it happened.50

Like so many others, D'Arcy showed promise, while being an indifferent scholar. What made him different was his determination to keep learning. His poor grades at the university did not reflect his growing commitment to scholarship and to the world of books. Throughout his life, D'Arcy would teach himself those things he considered really important. His journal entries would reflect a man who was interested in philosophy, who wrote poetry, kept lists of books he wanted to read, and notes on books he had read. The university offered D'Arcy McNickle the opportunity to develop his talents as a writer.
ENDNOTES


18. Coleman, 36.

19. Ibid., 39.

20. Ibid., 43.

21. Ibid., 15.

22. Ibid., 16.

23. Ibid., 24.

24. Ibid., 24.

25. Ibid., 31.


29. Coleman, 79.
30. Ibid., 81.
31. Ibid., 82.
32. Ibid., 30.
35. Ibid., 7.
38. Coleman, 89.
42. Ibid., 107-108.


CHAPTER 2

FINDING THE VOICE - Being and Becoming

At the University

Simple as it sounds, it has always been for me too illusive to grasp. Part of the process of knowing the self must be to learn the value of the self and to exact its price...

D'Arcy McNickle, 17 July 1931, Journal entry

...The elders were fond of saying that, if a man expected to find truth, he should seek it alone....he had discovered that he could think better...when he went off by himself.

D'Arcy McNickle, Runner In The Sun

When he enrolled at Montana State University, in September, 1921, D'Arcy Dahlberg would begin his adult life; one which would be filled with opportunities and continually interrupted by circumstance. As he had always, D'Arcy seized every opportunity for learning, and for experience. During his tenure at the university, D'Arcy's studies included courses: in English and history -- including The History of England and The Economic History of England; in science -- psychology, botany, and zoology; in economics -- introduction to economics and economic resources; and in languages -- Latin
and Greek. He studied fine arts and music -- drawing, music analysis and violin.

At the university, he was on the editorial staff of the *Frontier, A Literary Magazine*. In 1920, one year before D'Arcy arrived at the university, Harold G. Merriam, a Rhodes scholar, who had become chairman of the English Department, with his students, founded the *Frontier*, which although small, would become an influential regional publication. D'Arcy worked on the staff for two years, and he was senior editor for the 1924--1925 winter edition. He contributed poetry and short prose pieces. Seeing his work and his name in print reinforced his growing determination to become a professional writer.

D'Arcy's interest in drama and literature was shared by fellow student, Joran Birkeland. Joran was circulation manager of the *Frontier*, and she also contributed to several issues. D'Arcy and Joran would often meet for long walks. He had a favorite spot along Clark's Fork, the river close to the campus. As he had done with his sister, Florence, D'Arcy would take Joran fishing. He often brought a book along. D'Arcy learned to love books, and always carried one or two around with him. Many years later, in a letter to a friend, D'Arcy would write about how this was a very unpopular thing to do on a college campus at that time, unless you were going to class. In the journal that he kept throughout his life, D'Arcy would keep careful record of the titles of books he had read, and those he intended to read, including quoted passages of what the authors had written that especially impressed him.

Photographs of D'Arcy McNickle show a man who looked more French than Indian. Few people were aware of his Indian ancestry. He was of average height and
medium build. What made him handsome, perhaps, was dark wavy hair swept back from a high forehead in a pronounced widow's peak. Behind his glasses, his eyes were dark and intelligent and when he smiled, his eyes did too. While some photographs show a mustache, others do not. His clothes were not stylish, but always appeared to be clean and neat. D'Arcy maintained a sense of personal privacy that few people were invited to enter. He was quiet and serious, introspective and painfully aware of his own shyness. However, his focus was not enough on course work, as he would admit years later in a job application form:

Let me first explain that at the time I left the University of Montana I had been suspended for one term, not for inadequacy of scholarship or misconduct, but for too many absences from classes...you may also surmise that my interest in poetry,...was what got me in trouble with the dean. The fact amounted to that I was spending a good deal of my time composing verse and reading in the library and I had got into the habit of staying away from classes. I can say roughly as to the number of credits earned, that out of a total of 154 required for graduation, I had earned some 130, and therefore had at most two terms work to complete.³

As much as he had been determined to do so, D'Arcy would not complete his degree at the University of Montana. As it would happen throughout his life, unforseen circumstances would interrupt his plans, and require him to redirect his path. What contributed to his inner strength during this time and throughout his life? What would enable him to overcome obstacles, to meet challenges head on, and to make a path for others to follow was a particularly strong support system. One he may not have been, at first, aware of.
Images of Smoke and Spirit

Archilde wanted to ask him why he was a priest, but he was afraid it was one of those questions that wouldn't get a satisfactory answer. There were questions like that, he had discovered. So he contented himself with watching Father Cristadore.

D'Arcy McNickle, The Surrounded

So, after years, he had returned to the beginning of life, ... he walked through familiar dark halls with their niches of colored statuettes and their odor of resinous incense ... He was accustomed to the church as a kind of theater of movement and ceremony, but now that he saw it as an empty room he felt that he must know more about it. It was like having been frightened by a strange object at night and then going forth by daylight to examine the meaningless bogey, not yet convinced it was unreal ... was it true? He was spurred on by his desire to know. Questions had to be answered ... He stood motionless while he tried to reconcile his memory of the rich ceremony which went on before the altar with the shabbiness which he now saw. In the effort the simple faith of childhood died quietly ... It was inexplicable, but the dread which had been instilled into the mind of the child never quite disappeared from the mind of the grown man.

D'Arcy McNickle, The Surrounded

... breathing the unhealthy mist of a hundred generations before his day ... these were his people ... They fought when the hand of the spirit pushed them forward -- when it turned against them, they bowed their heads before the wind of wrath ... the breath in their nostrils was fatalism -- these were the hundred generations who stood behind Archilde.

D'Arcy McNickle, Notes for "The Hungry Generations"

The Unquenchable

When after distant wandering returns
The heart of man to seek thy holy knee
And stoops there, supplicant, what must he see
That drives him forth again? His hunger years
For that which will appease; his thirsting burns
Within his throat-- and yet he will not be
Appeased or freshened. Coming late to thee
He flees thy temple, gifts of peace he spurns.

And he has carved thine image in rough stone,
Upreared old towers to thy name, made loud
Protest of love. Yet, though his ways are weak
And articles, he goes wandering, alone.
Is there some later vision, then, more proud,
Some temple broader still that he would seek?

There is no evidence indicating that D'Arcy McNickle was an especially religious man. He did admit to being baptized Catholic, and to being a member of the Flathead Indian Tribe. The fact of his being Catholic and American Indian assigned to him a divided position of which he did not seem to be consciously aware. The Sisters of Providence and Jesuit Brothers ran the mission schools that D'Arcy and his sisters had attended. In 1917, education for American Indians began to become more secularized when Congress abolished the practice of paying subsidies to religious groups for Indian education. In 1921, the Snyder Act made the Department of the Interior responsible for Indian education, medical, and social services. Since D'Arcy had attended boarding school prior to this time, his education would have included religious instruction as part of the school curriculum.

Those children attending Roman Catholic school were presented with a powerful visual religious message through image. A famous teaching aid was known as Lacombe's Ladder which made clear in a way that words could not, how frightening missionaries' depiction of the road to Hell might have been to impressionable children. Pictured in
graphic detail on the Ladder were the lost souls, mainly aboriginal, on the way down to perdition, while those climbing up to Paradise were white. Such an evangelical message contributed to the mandate of the schools; American Indians' culture and belief was dangerous, a serious threat to salvation.

Although D'Arcy McNickle did not speak about his own belief, some hint of it may, perhaps, be found in his fiction; particularly, in his first Novel, *The Surrounded*.

The church! In the beginning, everything. One remembered early mass in winter; arising from bed, washing in freezing water, then marching, half asleep, in a column of silent boys, the snow whipping into one's face, stinging one's eyes; arriving in the frigid church where the air, like one's body, seemed too stiff to move; the march to the altar in the dim lamplight, finger-tips together, eyes downcast. That had been all there was to life. One lived in the perpetual tyranny of life-everlasting....he still visualized an old cosmograph showing the righteous ascending into heaven to join the Father Almighty, while the damned fell into the flames of hell, he also recalled scenes of unorthodoxy, what might have been labeled the First False Steps. It was curious and unaccountable, how an incident, of no importance in itself, lodged unnoticed in the mind, took root, sent out branches; and in proper season the sweet or bitter taste of its fruit flavored everything.8

In 1918, the Native American Church with ritual surrounding the use of peyote was incorporated in Oklahoma by members of the Kiowa, Comanche, Apache, Cheyenne, Ponca and Oto tribes. Perhaps, this incorporation was a move to counteract the increasing encroachment of an organized belief system so alien to their own.

In his novel, *The Surrounded*, what has been described by others as unflattering portraits painted of Christian missionaries, perhaps, can be characterized more as being so because D'Arcy's portrayal of all of his characters was without mystery or awe. He saw and described, good and bad, as a reporter might.

Father Grepilloux no longer held the title of Superior. He was simply an old man come home to die. The Mission was his creation. He had reared it up in the
wilderness and then, years ago, had gone on to other duties like a soldier whose course is plotted for him by his superiors. A year ago, after he had passed his eightieth birthday and could no longer keep up with younger workers, he had come back to write a history of his work and to sink peacefully into oblivion.9

Much of what was written in D'Arcy McNickle's novel, The Surrounded could be description of his own memories. D'Arcy may have been recalling his own when he describes Archilde's violin teacher:

Father Cristadore was a pleasant man who smiled a lot, and somehow he did not seem religious. He did not have a religious face, which should be rather long and rather thin and rather sad.... He did not mind laughing if something amused him. He had quick movements and an outward way of doing things. His cassock seemed to be in the way of his free stride.10

Only one who was accustomed to close observation of another could describe a person, and by doing so, reflect his own, and his character's humanity.

Neither religion, nor the religious were romanticized in D'Arcy McNickle's fiction or nonfiction writing. Again, in The Surrounded, he writes:

The center of life was the mission church, a tall structure of red brick, with steep roof, lanced windows, a vestigial transept and an abrupt bell tower. Plain as it was, the hovels which were set against it gave it an air of grandeaur. The newcomers thought Indiantown had been built without a plan, but they were wrong. There had been a plan, even if it didn't lend itself to street construction and regularity. Each cabin faced the church. Each door--there were no windows--gave a full view of God's tall house and the cropped poplar trees around it.11

"Plain as it was..." described a simple dwelling, not ostentatious, yet undeniably a central, strong presence in the societal scheme. D'Arcy recognized the church as a powerful force for socialization.

He also realized how some history had been written, which portrayed a false picture of the past; the matter of record having been scribed by those inspired more by
misunderstanding than by intentional ill intent. And in his novels, the characters D'Arcy describes as being so human, perhaps, are exceptional in their thoughtfulness of this fact.

In *The Surrounded*, upon reading diary entries of the Jesuits who settled his community in 1854, the character, Max makes no accusation, instead, making an attempt to understand.

To Max, who had never heard them, these stories were surprising. He knew in a vague way that the Salish people had a reputation for having met the white men with open friendliness; but now to say that they had stood ready to be Christianized, and even sought out the priests—that was bewildering. It made him feel all at once that he was ignorant of these people,..."Then you think they understood your ideas?" Such doubts had never lived in the old priest's head....'They wanted to know the right Faith, their hearts were inclined."

There are two stories in D'Arcy's novel that best illustrate the conflict he may have experienced in regard to religion. His curiosity about the mystery, and his attraction to the pomp and circumstance of formal religion conflicted with the fatalistic philosophy of the American Indian in which he had been raised, a belief in the acceptance of what was, and a connection with nature.

When he recalled,...the Punch and Judy shows which Old Father Etienne...performed for the boys, it was to remember the resentment which he had learned to feel. In everything else he had been docile toward his pious teachers, but in that they had over-reached themselves.

He could not remember the story of the puppet show clearly, but it was ominous in its morality. It had to do with a Sinner who went on sinning and sinning and never repenting, until finally he was hit on the head by Satan and dragged off to Hell. It was wonderful to watch the dolls, dressed like real people, as they bowed to each other and walked about; but the final scene between Satan and the Sinner always had been upsetting. The Sinner was a happy person, part of his sinning was his happy disposition, his singing and carousing with Merry Companions, and when Satan hit him on the head, to everyone's amusement, Archilde felt wronged; it was not amusing.

There had been another occasion, he now recalled, which had given rise to disturbing thoughts and dreams.
He remembered the day clearly, for apparently it had had a profound effect on him. The students were playing in the school yard late one afternoon, just before the supper hour. The sky was clear except for a single cloud, resembling at first a puff of smoke, which had drifted directly above the yard. Its contour changed, becoming elongated and flattened, and finally by curious coincidence, it assumed the form of a cross—in the reflection of the setting sun, a flaming cross.

The prefect was the first to observe the curiosity and it put him into a sort of ecstasy. He ran about the yard, shouting and clapping his hands, and collecting the boys in a group in the center of the yard.

"The Sign! The Sign!" he shouted. His face was flushed and his eyes gave off flashing lights—Archilde did not forget them.

"The Sign! Kneel and pray!"

The boys knelt and prayed, some of them frightened and on the point of crying. They knew what the Sign signified—it was to announce the Second Coming of Christ, when the world was to perish in flames!

As Archilde followed the prayers, he watched the cloud, moving slightly so as to place himself behind a larger boy. Before he knew it, his entire attention was on the apparition. The others knelt with bowed heads, ready to be struck down.

He saw the horizontal bar of the cross melt into the blue and for a moment longer an irregular streak of crimson was all that remained. Then the entire structure became woolly, leaving here and there bits of mist touched by the red hues of the evening sun. That was all.

It was not the disappearance of the threatening symbol which freed him from the priest's dark mood, but something else. At the very instant that the cross seemed to burn most brightly, a bird flew across it. Actually the bird was much lower, but it appeared almost to touch the cloud. It flew past and returned several times before finally disappearing—and what seized Archilde's imagination was the bird's unconcernedness. It recognized no 'Sign'. His spirit lightened. He felt himself fly with the bird. When he looked at the priest again he saw in him only darkness and heaviness of spirit. He would never feel at ease around the prefect after than; and he would never fear him. There would be something of scorn in his thoughts. 14

Being a keen observer of people and situations, D'Arcy McNickle may have sometimes seemed ruthless in his 'fictional' depiction of organized religion.
and

and
Of paltry purposes on parade.

... There may be darker things than these beneath
The skin; there may be feelings still confined--
That prod the spirit on to restlessness
And make it hard to live at ease, If so
I pray that there may come again a son
Of man, to die in torment and mockery,
And salve the pricking cares of lesser men,
With dignity, decorum, and pageantry.  

D'Arcy was accustomed to the paternalism of the agents of the federal government on the reservation, and to the representatives of a superior being at school. Seeing the very human flaws in them, perhaps, makes it understandable that D'Arcy would choose to maintain an independence. In another poem he wrote at this time, perhaps, he best describes himself.

**Portrait**

Before he would be caught in belief
He'd give his living heart
To the ravens; he would not show grief
At promise torn apart.

And proved delusion-- but in his quick
Disdain was the fawn-eyed fear
That hope would find him out and stick
Some day, and cost him dear.

So that was why he kept up guard
And strove with such inane
Effort to have us think him hard,
And why we counted him vain.  

More spiritual than religious, D'Arcy believed that every man must make
his own path; discover his own truth. In 1937, the controversy surrounding John Collier, Commissioner of Indian Affairs and D'Arcy McNickle, best illustrates D'Arcy's position on religion. As an administrative assistant for The Bureau of Indian Affairs, (BIA) D'Arcy was assigned to write a review of Oliver LaFarge's Novel, The Enemy Gods. The novel told a story about a young Navajo, Myron Begay, who had been brought up by Christian missionaries; had even considered becoming a missionary himself, renouncing the religion of his ancestors. Gradually, however, Begay begins to doubt the tenets of Christianity, and by the end of the story, he returns to the religion of his people. D'Arcy had been impressed with the honesty of the story, and with LaFarge's ability as a non-Indian to convey the nature of the conflict within the young man as he made his spiritual pilgrimage. In his review, D'Arcy tried to place the character's experience into historical context. He wrote:

'The Indian' has always had 'friends' and it has sometimes seemed that the 'friends' have been his worst enemies. The abolitionists, the humanity lovers, out of employment after the Civil War, found the naked, hounded red man and cuddled him close. They offered Bibles instead of bullets, and there were Indians who thought it was a poor exchange. A dead Indian, they would say, is better off than LaFarge's Myron Begay, at the moment when, frenzied by the cheap rascality of Christian soul-saving, he stood up in a kind of missionary pep-meeting and denied his Gods. 17

He also wrote that such a search for religious truth was not exclusively an Indian experience but a universal one.

This 'passion in the desert', must have been old stuff when the Cro-Magnon were getting the spirit of things into imaged reality on their cavern walls. Why, then, label it as Indian or heathen? Why call it picturesque? Why, on the one hand, try to stamp it out, or, on the other, simper about it? Truly it is one with the frenzy imaged by the prophets of Israel. It is in the stream of race consciousness. Amen to that. 18
At the time it was written, the review provided The American Indian Federation (AIF) with additional ammunition in their attempt to abolish the BIA, which they labelled as being "...part of an atheist-communist international conspiracy." The federation numbered only a few hundred, very vocal members, which included; those assimilated Indians who were, more or less, successfully managing their own property, those Indians who had been converted to Christianity by conservative Protestant missionary sects, and those who, for various reasons, wanted to see the BIA put out of business entirely. John Collier's reforms; his efforts to reconstitute the tribes, and to strengthen tribal government were seen by this group as a threat to their own hard-won independence. Those Indians who had pledged allegiance to private property concerns, and other religions objected to Collier, perhaps, because his work to preserve tribal identity and tradition was seen as a romanticization of it. Others asserted that his interest in preserving tribal organizations was communist-inspired, and that his refusal to grant special privileges to various churches and their missionaries in Indian boarding schools was 'anti-Christian'.

In his administration of the BIA, Collier had long been accused by some of being 'anti-Christian'; of undoing all of the religious work with the American Indians prior to his appointment, because he encouraged them in their own belief and continued practice. He wanted to restore American Indians' political and social autonomy. D'Arcy McNickle believed in the importance of free choice for every man.

In June, 1940, at a congressional hearing, Alice Lee Jemison, (Seneca) representative of the American Indian Federation, and John Collier met head-on. The hearing had been called to clarify a committee report on a bill, supported by Jemison,
which would exempt certain groups from the Wheeler-Howard Act (Indian Reorganization Act, 1934). According to Collier, the Senate committee's report on the bill, which had already been sent to the House, had included Jemison's charges made during an earlier hearing, but had deliberately omitted the Indian Bureau's response. At this second hearing, Collier insisted that the Bureau's position be made part of the record. Jemison then quoted D'Arcy McNickle's review, which had been published in December, 1937 in what she described as the "government-financed propaganda sheet called Indians at Work." 20)

D'Arcy had considered the attacks made by Jemison and the American Indian Federation prior to this time, as only a nuisance. Jemison's attack upon him before a congressional committee was different. Not only his writing, but his intellectual and moral integrity. Collier's supported McNickle. While he admitted that the choice of words D'Arcy had used in writing the review had been unfortunate, he explained that they were written "by a man who, because he is himself an Indian, has deep and sincere emotions concerning any interference with what he calls 'the stream of race consciousness'." 21 He assured the committee that D'Arcy was an excellent worker, who gave no evidence of being anti-Christian.

When he was questioned about his religious philosophy, D'Arcy offered explanation for his position more than defense. He then admitted that the offending phrase in his review of the LaFarge book was poorly chosen, and added; "I was trying to describe something which I thought people were not fully aware of. I was trying to show in the book review that Indians have not always been satisfied with the white man's ways
or his religion, and that there were Indians who feel that an Indian who denied his gods was betraying his people." While he respected the knowledge of what he had been taught about a Superior Being; by this time, D'Arcy McNickle had learned the value of advisors; the American Indian custom of observing and listening to elders, those who had become wise with knowledge and experience. John Collier's intervention on his behalf, probably saved his job with the BIA. D'Arcy McNickle had left home at an early age and had never returned. Although he realized from the beginning, that the journey must be his own, he would learn to seek advice.

**Elders, land and legacy**

The song was old, telling of a time when a boy listened eagerly for voices, wherever they might be, the voices of men, of the wind, of stars moving through the night.

A time when a boy came to a campfire and when men were talking in the shadows, their voices rising to laughter, falling away before a drumbeat, coming strong again...

*D'Arcy McNickle, The Surrounded*
Who marked land before
Our time we take the pace
They set, and close the door

D'Arcy McNickle, Miscellaneous verse, undated

As much as D'Arcy McNickle kept to himself, he was connected to others; elders and mentors, men who had made paths for themselves at times when others did not see a way. At this time, he may not have realized the value of the legacy left by those who had gone before him. D'Arcy's maternal grandfather, Isador Parenteau, (Me'tis) had fought for his land, and lost; moving on to begin again. His father, William McNickle, the son of Irish immigrants, made legal claim to land in his children's name to protect their rights and to ensure their future. Land, hard-won, was the currency that fueled D'Arcy McNickle's dreams.

Isador Plante Parenteau, like many of his Me'tis kinsmen, had participated in the 1869 Northwest Rebellion, sometimes referred to as the Riel Rebellion, after leader Louis Riel, in Saskatchewan Territory. The Me'tis, descendents of Cree Indians and French trappers, saw the Hudson's Bay Company's sale of the northwest territory to the Canadian government as a threat to their livelihood and traditions. When men arrived to survey the land and plot it into sections for homesteading and sale, the Me'tis reacted violently. Despite temporary truces and short-lived resolutions of the conflict, the hostilities lasted sixteen years. In 1885, Riel was captured, tried, and hanged for his part in the rebellion.

The particular role of Isador in the rebellion remains unclear, but the part he played cost him his farm, his home and livestock. He and his family were forced to flee south, across the border. The war lost, many of the Me'tis fled southward into the United
States, living as best they could and wandering from reservation to reservation. Most stayed in central and eastern Montana, where they remained landless and persecuted until those who remained were granted their own lands after the turn of the century. Isador was an experienced farmer with no land, who supported his family by hiring himself out for wages. As a result of the family's acceptance and adoption by the Salish, Isador's daughter, Philomene, was allotted eighty acres of farmland, as were each of her three children, Ruth, Florence and D'Arcy McNickle.

The daughter of an exiled Me'tis leader, and the wife of an anglo, Philomene's only legacy was her land allotment. Her husband, William McNickle, D'Arcy's father, had taken the steps necessary to officially enroll his family as members of the Flathead Tribe, before the division and allotment of reservation land. And it had been William who farmed the allotted land for his children so that it would not be confiscated and sold.

Although William lived nearby, and had remained in close contact with his children after the divorce; once the children left for Chemawa, the family began to drift apart. The fact that D'Arcy favored his mother, especially after the divorce, perhaps, caused him to underestimate the important part that William McNickle played in his life. Yet his father's actions on his behalf, enabled D'Arcy to continue his schooling at a time when it could have been permanently interrupted.

In 1924, when D'Arcy began to worry about money, and if he would have enough of it to pay for his senior year at college; his only tangible asset was his land. Someone was now leasing his land, and he wrote several times to the agency to see if anything could be done to ensure more regular payments. His sisters had already sold
portions of their allotments. D'Arcy wanted to obtain a fee patent; use his land as collateral for a loan, or sell it outright. If he could get two or three thousand dollars for his land, he could not only finish school, but spend his senior year at Amherst which, encouraged by his college advisor, H.G. Merriam, he badly wanted to do.

His letter to Superintendent Charles Coe was passionate. "I'm into this thing heart and soul,...I want to grasp every possible advantage in getting my education. It is the best thing I can get out of my youth...when everything I ever do in the future depends on how I train and equip myself now." Because D'Arcy was not yet twenty-one, Coe advised him to wait one more year, then apply again. In 1925, one month after his twenty-first birthday, D'Arcy filed for a fee patent. He had to justify his request, and explained that he would like to go to an eastern college or to Europe to do graduate work. His application was approved and he sold his allotment.

The sale of his allotment may have signalled a break from family. When his father died in 1929, D'Arcy made no mention of it in his journal; it is even possible that he did not know of his death at the time. And in 1932, D'Arcy would write in his journal. "I am in correspondance with mother after a lapse of two years. (He had written to the Superintendent for her address.) She seems to be making a passable living, but if I had to help her I don't know how I could do it with any degree of safety to ourselves." By that time, D'Arcy and his wife, Joran were expecting their first child. The "passable living" of his mother indicated that she was, perhaps, more fortunate than many others.

In 1928, the federal government had commissioned The Institute for Government Research to conduct a study of the living conditions of American Indians. The results of
this study, better known as The Merriam Report, revealed that life for most American Indians was filled with poverty, suffering and discontent. Indians suffered from disease and malnutrition, had a life expectancy of only forty-four years, and had an average annual per capita income of only one hundred dollars. The BIA was inadequately meeting their needs, especially in the areas of health and education. And they were being excluded from the management of their own affairs. All of this would change due to the impact of this report, and the influence of John Collier, who became BIA Commissioner in 1932.

When D'Arcy McNickle would write in his journal about not wanting to return to "...the scenes from which I fled...", he was, as yet, unaware that he would also be instrumental in the orchestration of changes necessary; not only to improve living conditions for all American Indians, but to increased opportunities. Perhaps, it was necessary for him to break ties, and to cross boundaries before returning to make a difference.

When federal guardianship of Indian land had ended in 1920, all land, except what was designated reservation, went to the highest bidder. American Indians who were unwilling or unable; could not afford, to farm their allotments, would be forced to sell land that had been allotted to their family a generation ago. At a time when so many others were losing their land, D'Arcy McNickle chose to sell his allotment. Many years later, he would write, "...in my impatience I sold my land allotment." With the sale of his land, it became apparent that D'arcy's primary focus was on education. For one who was raised by those accustomed to a tentative existence; to a future that was always in doubt; survival, whatever the cost, was of primary importance. D'Arcy McNickle was the first of a generation of American Indians who would move from the land, educated, and better
Influence and Interruptions

The days pass slowly in a boy's mind, since so little is anticipated; ends are never seen in beginnings. But his mind still burned with the flaming image of his grandfather's face... 'What did you see today? What did you learn?' Like the images, those words were still there, reminding him of how a man should conduct himself... They had started a journey that day in the mountains, and now, perhaps, they were coming to an end... Stories would be told into the night in days and years to come... He heard the voices behind him, the easy laughter, shreds of song,...

D'Arcy McNickle, Wind From An Enemy Sky

To be one among his people, to grow up in their respect, to be his grandfather's kinsman-- this was a power in itself, the power that flows between people and makes them one. He could feel it now, a healing warmth that flowed into his center from many-reaching body parts.

Still, he had no shell of hardness around him. He was going into a country where danger would be waiting... It was uncertain territory.

D'Arcy McNickle, Wind From An Enemy Sky

There is a tradition among American Indian peoples to especially respect and reverence their elders, keepers of the stories. Their wisdom is believed necessary to the spiritual survival of the individual and to the physical survival of the people. Grandparents often had primary responsibility for the children's early education. Philomene's parents, the Parenteous, lived close to the McNickles in the early years of D'Arcy's childhood.
D'Arcy must have spent some memorable time with his maternal grandfather, Isador Parenteau. In later years, D'Arcy remembered childhood visits made to Saskatchewan with his mother and grandfather, to visit relatives and friends. In 1910, Isador was pardoned for the part he played in the Riel Rebellion, and allowed to return to Canada. Perhaps, his grandfather told him stories. Not being a man to speak or write directly of untroubled relationships, D'Arcy's close relationship with his grandfather would become known only upon Isador's death; at a time, perhaps, when D'Arcy first realized the elder's influence upon him. What he wrote in his fiction may give some hint of this relationship remembered.

In notes he made for his short story, "Snowfall", D'Arcy could be describing such a special relationship.

...even without words, to travel with a man like his grandfather was to learn much. You watched how his moccasins met the ground and you found it very tiring. The foot never struck the loose pebbles, always avoided the dry twig. You followed the example, but you lost your balance, crashed into a bush, scattered stones.\(^{30}\)

And in The Silver Locket, a short story written about this time, D'Arcy writes about the death of someone loved:

He picked up a telegram from the bed on which he was sitting and the words seemed to shout themselves from the written page: '...died this morning...Please come'...He laid the message down,...Of course he could come, but why, now that it was all over?...It seemed to him, now as he sat on the edge of the bed moodily staring out of the window, that he had been indifferently listening to a concert. And it must have been beautiful, for now that the music had ceased and the musicians and patrons departed the concert hall had grown suddenly dull and cold. Nor did he have the power to call them back again. Could he gain anything by going after them?...Perhaps he did not visualize the concert hall, nor the musicians and patrons, but he did feel that the song and the dance were over...\(^{31}\)

Isador's song was over but D'Arcy McNickle was just beginning his. Being born
of a people possessing the custom of generation upon generation of knowledge shared,

D'Arcy dealt with his grief by taking refuge in the university library; the repository of the recorded wisdom of others. When Isidore died in the spring of 1925, D'Arcy stopped going to classes; and instead, spent hours in the library; reading and writing poetry. At this time, he wrote a poem as tribute to his Grandfather, Old Isador celebrated the old man as a Montana pioneer whose life had given shape to the frontier:

**Old Isador**

Lord God! Give him rest,
Out in those far, obscure hills,
Where for him was peace--
And where his heart wandered sadly...

I
I have wondered how it is that you are here,
O Montana,
For I have come to you many a time--
Dumb with the wonder of you...
I have come to you in the dawn-time,
When all a Universe seemed sleeping in your forests,
And your great mountains doomed tremendously--

I have come to you in July hayfields,
Walked at evening through your shadowed haycocks,
Walked in the fragrance of your youthful meadows--

I have come to you at quiet stream-sides,
Dropped and drank of the crystal water,
Laughed and flipped pebbles at timorous minnows--

On sunset prairies I have come to you,
And seen you flash from a cabin-window
The fire and song of all effort and hope--

And so these many times I have come to you,
O Montana,
And I have wondered--
still waters run deep.

II
But I had not known,
Until that day in a shabby dead-man's parlor,
How much was answered in old--
Old Isador strangely dead.

You do not know Old Isador,
You men who are tailing Now,
You, men who will toil for Tomorrow's hundred years--
Nor need you to know Old Isador.

For as I stood in the house of death
I looked long--
And into my ears came singing,
And into my heart, mystery,
And an answer for mystery...

I knew, that as he alone had not given you a voice,
O Montana,
That he alone had given this much,
This unalterable, deathless bit...

And how many hundred others,
Coming at last to a shabby house of death,
Giving you a voice,
O Montana!

The whence of their coming, the why,
Being unknown to you,
Men of the Now and of the Morrow--
Nor need it be known.

III
And into my ears came singing
The singing of Old Isador;
And it was this that he sang,
That he shall sing to me down through the days of my living.--

High and clear,
Singing as the waters of the mountain,
On the wind,
Singing high and clear;--
'In starlight
In ancient faded starlight,
I have talked with One who is my God
And know that life is small,
For he has shown it so
In the ageless lapping of water,
In the timeless throat of the song-bird,
In the endless dream of the mountains...

In starlight,
In ancient splendid starlight,
I have known life to be bitter,
For I have seen tears--
Tears for the living, and
For the dead, the same
But I have lived--
And some things have been good...

And I die,
Here in a far dim corner.
I do not even go upon the wind
To tell men that I die;
It is well that none should care;
For I have but come with a song for singing,
I have chopped at trees for a pathway,
I have held the plow to the earth-breast,
Tamed the wilderness of horses,
Now--Others may come with their songs for singing--
And their singing shall be life.
And so...and so..., I have lived and I die.'

IV
No, you do not know Old Isador
But I have come from him;
I have come from his side
Where I have touched his lips
And know his heart to be chill
With the strange chill of a silent heart;
And because of touching him
I know that there is mystery in breath & blood.

V
O, there is need of many fathers to give birthright to a state,
And many fathers shall be but thin grey men
With their hearts still in the forests,
And on the praries,
Where before had been the whisper of their quickened tread!

And these thin grey men shall know at last
The shabby house of death...
So is there nor evil nor good,
Only the passage of life...

And because of them, you are here,
O Montana;
And there is not mystery
That is not the mystery of breath and blood.

You have taken Old Isador, now,
Let there be warmth in the young breast of you.
Bring the silence out of your dim hills
And enshroud him, Montana...

The poem won first prize in a statewide contest sponsored by The Missoulian, the local newspaper. This poem would be the first of many that D'Arcy would write at times when his feelings ran deep, and were best expressed by him through written word. D'Arcy McNickle was a thoughtful man, and a thorough researcher who maintained a professional neutrality in his non-fiction writing, and a balanced reportorial style in his fiction. Only in his poetry did he express what for him, remained unspoken—emotion.

D'Arcy McNickle would not graduate from the University of Montana. The dean put him on temporary suspension. His formal education was interrupted, but it did not end. D'Arcy would receive honorary degrees much later, but he would never complete his college degree; a fact of which he would become increasingly aware as he moved in ever more educated circles.
His grandfather's death marked an ending for D'Arcy McNickle; of an uninterrupted formal education, and of a childhood, which would become recorded memories. It also marked a beginning. D'Arcy's learning would continue throughout his life. In 1925, at the age of 21, D'Arcy seized the opportunity to gain knowledge outside of what he could learn at the university; in the classrooms or in the library. This learning of another kind was travel. And an adventure was begun.

**Boundaries Crossed**

29 September 1925

To Whom It May Concern,

Mr. D'Arcy Dahlberg, the bearer of this note, was a student of English literature in the English Department of the State University of Montana for four years and did much of his work under me. He was a student of good purpose and fine attainment in literature, and as a writer of verse revealed penetrating imagination, delicate fancy, strong and controlled emotion, and originality. He wrote prose of quiet energy and sublety of expression. I can therefore recommend him to Oxford University as a student of sincere purpose, of considerable promise, and of devotion to literature. It is upon my recommendation that he is seeking residence at Oxford University.

Faithfully yours,

H.G. Merriam
Chairman Department of English
State University of Montana

H.G. Merriam, Letter of recommendation for D'Arcy McNickle

...I shall not forget it soon. Moonless, starless, mist-hidden. A wind blowing neither warm nor cold but softly penetrating. And within myself these voices of song...(reference to Walt Whitman)...And I was dreaming, sentimentally, of the day when Americans would be walking under strange stars, singing the songs of their own adventure. And I heard how Whitman has whispered down the ages--'I hear
America singing—,' And it seemed, then, that such things could happen.

D'Arcy McNickle, Published article Sailing, A-Sailing\textsuperscript{34}

It was his mentor, Professor Merriam, a Rhodes scholar, who convinced D'Arcy McNickle to finish his degree at Oxford University, in England. Merriam's strong letter of recommendation resulted in McNickle's admission. This would be D'Arcy's first experience away from the security of family or friends, and his first encounter with foreign people and custom. It was on September 30, 1925, that D'Arcy Dahlberg, full of high hope and expectation sailed for England on the North German liner, Columbus. D'Arcy observed, and described his experience on board the ship. The string quartet played at dinner with "Teutonic heaviness". The attractive young woman he met, was "a sister to the original Eve". "Beer and music! I wonder what manner of philosophical or chemical arrangement makes for such a combination."\textsuperscript{35} The ship crossing may have been the best of what became a disappointing experience.

Oxford University was a great disappointment for D'Arcy McNickle. The community of scholars that he had hoped to become a part of intimidated him by their facile use of language; their habit of verbal sparring, and their mastery of sophisticated word games. Perhaps, Merriam had shared D'Arcy's unrealistic expectations. While D'Arcy's own writing revealed "penetrating imagination, delicate fancy, strong and controlled emotion, and originality..." D'Arcy was in no way prepared for his encounter with those more worldly wise and cosmopolitan in character and experience. He would spend most of the year there, but found that university officials would not accept all of his
credits. It would take at least two years to complete a degree. He was homesick and lonely, handicapped by his shyness, and unaccustomed to the damp cold of England's climate. "The only time I felt warm at Oxford was when I drank steaming tea beside a glowing fireplace stacked with channel coal." As he had at Chemawa, D'Arcy found it difficult to make friends, but he realized the importance of doing so now. He must have missed the camaraderie he observed; of companions with which to exchange and discuss ideas. In later years, as he would not refer to the boarding school at Chemawa, neither would he refer to Oxford University, except to say that he had been there.

Despite everything, D'Arcy decided to stay in Europe until his money ran out. He remained in England through December; auditing lectures, exploring the libraries and taking advantage of what study opportunities he could find on his own. In 1926, he moved to Paris with vague ideas of being a writer and musician. In May, he returned to New York. D'Arcy may have kept a journal at this time, but if so, it has been lost. In 1932, he looked back upon this period of his life and remembered: "I knew that I wanted to write and that I did not want to return to the scenes from which I fled. What exactly was on my mind on that May morning in 1926 when I returned from Paris, I cannot now recall."

And in notes he made for an untitled short story, he writes:

...I was in Paris during the after-war years, when a great many young Americans were lacerating themselves. I wasn't one of them. I didn't know they were there. I did my lacerating privately, without the benefit of an audience. I came back when the money gave out and it was necessary to find work. Until then I hadn't thought about work. Nothing that had happened in college had made this problem real, and certainly nothing in the Paris experience brought it to mind. Now my choice was clear. I could return to the West, where my father was operating with moderate
success a combined law-banking-real estate-insurance business, and fit myself into the pattern. Naturally, that was what he had expected, that was why he had been paying my way these years. On the other hand, I could follow my own inclination, say damn to the past and try my luck.

I followed my inclination. My damn to the past was uttered in dramatic circumstances as the 'Aquitania' came into New York harbor. Ignorance kept me from fear. How could I even remotely sense what difficulties lay ahead.

### Journalling

One wants to reach out, to receive it all, to plant it irradically in the soul.

D'Arcy McNickle, 28 June 1931, Journal entry

A good man is first of all timid, not out of cowardice-- cowardice will breed meanness-- but out of profound distrust of appearance; That is, knowing first appearances to be invariably false, he hesitates to appear for what he is not, and would rather be taken for a donkey because of his silence than for a wise man in two words. It is because he possesses such discrimination that he may be accounted good.

D'Arcy McNickle, 7 March 1932, Journal entry

D'Arcy lived in New York City from 1926 until 1936. The journal he kept during this period of his life, expressed much thought and reflection. It is record kept by a young man coming into his own; learning through experience, what is most important to him, and discovering the kind of man he wants to be. D'Arcy placed high expectations upon himself. "Simple as it sounds, it has always been for me too illusive to grasp. Part of the
process of knowing the self must be to learn the value of the self and to exact its price in
the universe. Rather than shunning or flying from an increasing complexity as, for
example, one's nature and becomes increasingly aware of the interrelations of society-- one
should enter more freely into it, welcome it...."41

As he expected much from himself, he expected the same of others. He began to
develop a political conscience. In 1924, the Indian Citizenship Act had awarded all
American Indians United States citizenship in recognition of their contribution as soldiers
in World War I. D'Arcy McNickle had been too young to go to war, but he became
determined to become an active, and knowledgeable citizen. During the Depression years,
as economic conditions got worse, he became convinced that neither the Republicans nor
the Democrats offered a real solution for the social and economic chaos that plagued the
country.

...Sometime ago at the office I chanced across a year-old clipping (N.Y.H.T., Sun.
Mag., Mar. 1, 1931), an article purporting to review the 'First Two Years of
Hoover'. In it this sentence: 'Throughout all the clamor and confusion of attack
President Hoover has steered a straight course, guided by two beacons-- his sense of
right and of public duty and the fundamental privileges of the party that has endured
seventy years in a position of leadership'

This seemed to be a singularly faithful example of that kind of 'realistic
analysis' which is supposed to clarify public thinking, make for an enlightened
electorate, etc. How confused, infantile!

America has been consistently following a program of industrial
development which nothing short of national catastrophe could have stopped any
time these past 100 years, but most intensely since the Civil War. The Republican
party has consistently been the organ through which the demands of this
industrialism-- tariffs, hands off business, private ownership, freedom in exploitation
have been expressed. To say the Republican party has been leading, is as much as to
say that a man being chased by a bull is only leading his prize bull to the fair!42
D'Arcy McNickle was certainly not a man who could be swayed by rhetoric. He did not believe that individual leaders could nor should be unduly credited for inevitable events-- good or bad. White or Indian; it did not matter if the leader was President Herbert Hoover, or Vice-President, Charles Curtis, (Kaw-Osage) the first American Indian elected to public office. History happened and individuals dealt with it. How a person dealt with it was the measure of the man. D'Arcy believed it to be the responsibility of every man to be knowledgeable enough to think for themselves about issues rather than being seduced by rhetoric. Education was the key. Writing in his journal, he gave shape to some of his ideas: "Sometimes we say politically, 'socialism may be all right, but first the people will have to be educated,' as if we were all in our present society sufficiently educated to know what we are about and intellectually fit to manage our destinies!"  

If I should formulate a philosophy at this time...I should call it the Doctrine of Eccentricity: No man may know the truth, for no truth exists except as that man knows it; no judgement is valid, ...there is no longer any chance of catching up and entrenching ourselves behind stout lines of dogma or systems, we must devote ourselves completely to self-training, objectivity, observation, rationalism, experimentalism, selflessness, chaos can't be dealt with according to the rules of party government.

It was more important to realize individual responsibility than to rely upon the authority of group leadership, and unthinking action.

Last night-- I saw a motion picture 'Hell Divers' which was produced, according to the notice under the title, with the cooperation of the U.S. Navy Department. In the climactic scene occurs one of those colossal acts of stupidity which the tradition of discipline not only makes possible but even elevates with a virtue: Two aeroplanes and four men-- have been forced down during a war game (rather one plane is disabled and falls and the crew of the second plane go to its rescue). These men, according to the story, are the most valuable in the squadron-- but that should not
necessarily alter the situation, the important thing, is that they are men. The aeroplane 'Saratoga' of which the men are part of the crew, sends out planes in search of the flyers for four days-- and then, upon receiving orders from the Navy Department in Washington, which has no proper understanding of this purely local incident, the 'Saratoga' gives up the search abruptly and heads for Nicaragua where an earthquake has damaged a town. Any man of sense must see that if the situation were governed by the men 'on the ground' some more rational solution would have been arrived at. It it were necessary to go to the relief of a stricken town, some discretion might still have been exercised in arranging for the rescue of the four flyers. But to have done so would have violated the principle of god-given wisdom in the commander of a military or naval machine. That such a machine could not exist without such unthinking subordination on the part of the under officers and men is probably true, but that is one of the very reasons why such machines dishonor mankind-- why acts of savage cruelty and unthinkable horror can be done in the name of one nation against another nation: the gunner pouring death when a town is not responsible, he is acting under orders; the man in command is not responsible, he is doing what the people of the nation require him to do; the people of the nation are not responsible: they don't know what its all about and can't properly visualize the act of standing behind a big gun and sending powerful shells into a city of frightened people. The ironist is amused that under such circumstances, such sometimes, an important code of conduct is disregarded with impunity.

D'Arcy McNickle was not a radical. During this period, he had no clear definition of who he was, or what he wanted of life but he was firm in his belief of individual right action. He distrusted the wisdom of empowering a group to oversee the many. In notes for a story he wrote at this time, he was more philosophical, less harsh, in his expression of belief. "...To be a judge, you got to be about perfect. You got to know everything, and you got to live up to it. Otherwise, you got nothing to say to anybody who does wrong. Anybody who puts himself up to be that good, he's just a liar. And people will laugh at him. We are friends among ourselves and nobody interferes in another person's business. That's how it is, and nobody wants to set himself up and be a judge." Perhaps, D'Arcy had known too many leaders not fit to be so; those he
described as 'busybody' reservation superintendents, and officious clergy. He would write in his journal; "Until the stronger learns that there is one truth for him as for the weaker--justice does not exist on earth."47

D'Arcy believed it wise to be cautious in taking the measure of a man; that it was important not to be deceived by outward appearance, nor to be too quick in judgement of good character. Even the poetry he would write at this time reflected such concern.

**Evolution**

I know myself allied to washed seaweed,  
To clouds on the loose, to smoke escaped and gone  
Skyward, to all things free of root upon  
This anchored earth. But I know the sober creed  
That's preached, that roots and stiff backbone precede

In virtue the talent of floating and drifting on,  
On water and air; as if we'd sprung of the spawn  
Of vertebrates at once and spurned the seed  
Of notochords forever. I for one  
Look to a Dodo going of the pride  
That bolsters backbone, when a man may sun  
Himself day in day out, and not be cried  
To shame because his wife and children faint,  
His business totters, his house needs paint.48

In taking the measure of himself at this time, D'Arcy McNickle seems to have had some doubts. In 1932, looking back at those early years in New York City; in reference, perhaps, to the shyness that continued to plague him, he wrote:

...modesty is a misused, misunderstood, sadly indefinite word. It may be made to do duty for shyness, self-deprivation,...distrust of the self in all of which there is probably a constitutional lack of bias; humility, which also is constitutional, but deserves to be set apart as having more hesitation, more closely allied with self-possession, than the individual's foregoing; and finally, a objective understanding of his deficiency in knowledge and ability to express adequately what he feels which
keeps him wisely, silent and removed.\textsuperscript{49}

He remembered his idealism, and his innocence:

...Learning instinctively, the ways of the prudent and worldly wise, I had no substitute for worldly wisdom. The instinct which led me away from the old path, was not competent to stumble upon another. I knew that I wanted to write and that I did not want to return to the scenes from which I had fled. What exactly was in my mind on that May morning 1926 when I returned from Paris, I cannot now recall. For one thing, I know that fear was..., rather apprehension. I was such an undisciplined, unaccountable, unwitting accident in the laws of causation...\textsuperscript{50}

D'Arcy McNickle did know that he wanted to write; "Inspiration drives me I work and work brings me inspiration."\textsuperscript{51} And this is what he would do those ten years in New York. His journalling reflected much of his experience at this time. "At twenty-six I have very poor equipment for writing...a writer must combine many arts and have in him much of the scholar. But in the few years, I have not been improvident with my time and I know that I shan't in future!"\textsuperscript{52}

\textbf{Necessary passage}

His eyes were constantly on her, he had begun to wonder why she had raced after him, what she expected of him, what he was to do next. He learned little through his eyes to satisfy this questioning; they rather added to his confusion and started other queries....

D'Arcy McNickle, \textit{The Surrounded}\textsuperscript{53}

There they were-- both making a good thing in their own rights. Both young-- having lots of fun. Then they decided to get married-- what was to be gained?

D'Arcy McNickle, \textit{Manhattan Wedlock}\textsuperscript{54}
How had it happened? He had asked himself the question suddenly, for the first time, in church that morning....How had it happened?...The routine which a year ago had seemed tedious and inevitable, now struck him as being out of his reach, lost to him....How had it happened? The moment of confusion endured until he had been made one with his bride....who then looked up shyly with a suggestion of tear film in her eyes, she brought ease to his heart....as she turned from the railing and looked softly upon him. And the question which had come so rudely upon him a short while before was dissolved in the smoke of the acolyte's censer.

D'Arcy McNickle, *The Wedding Night*

When D'Arcy left for England in 1925, he may have left much of his past behind him, but he did not forget his friend, Joran Birkeland. Joran had remained at the university where she completed her bachelor's degree the following June. Like D'Arcy, Joran wanted to become a writer. And D'Arcy persuaded her that the only place for a writer to be was where all of the major publishing houses were located-- New York City. He also persuaded her to marry him. Joran had been hesitant to make any commitment. She had looked forward to establishing herself, and gaining a sense of control over her own future. D'Arcy would later credit her with being the wiser of the two of them at that time. In November, 1926, financed only by money from a pawned watch, they were married. Six years later, regarding his hasty marriage, D'Arcy would write:

...all this resulted out of vagueness, confusion, failure to face the situation. nothing revealed failure more than hasty marriage to Joran who had wanted to wait a year each to get bearings-- as individuals and gain more life experience before life as couple. 'Every couple faces the same problems, but I am quite sure that our instance was singular in that we were both so miserably educated, not in book learning, though that was poor enough, but in ways of living, of meeting people, of conducting ourselves even before each other....
D'Arcy became an automobile salesman in Philadelphia; not at all what he had wanted to do. Neither did he feel suited for it. "The ineptitude of which I speak was more than country manners, I now realize. However it happened I cannot explain, but the fact is that I had been born in the opposition and I would not then, and feel that I never shall be able to accomodate myself to the exigencies of a world capitalistically regimented." He soon discovered that a job that depended upon commissions did not provide the dependable income needed to support a wife. He realized that selling automobiles was an experience he did not want to repeat. He described such high pressure salesmanship to be unintelligent, wasteful and ruthless. From what he wrote in his journal, even years later, bitter memories remained.

...In my first job, selling automobiles, I went through a seven-months' daily betrayal of my birthright in opposition. Everything I was called upon to do was a violation of instinct and desire. I continued the effort under the impression that my instincts and desires were untutored and therefore probably in error: I could see nothing in prospect by following them, whereas the only safety seemed to be in abandoning them. I was probably right and would undoubtedly be justified in feeling the same way today-- but I should have learned this: instincts, right or wrong, cannot be abandoned without seriously injuring integrity, out of which rise self-possession, confidence, the very ability to act and think. In all reason, it would be better to have the wrong instincts-- wrong in the sense of one's ability to accomodate oneself to the world-- to which one is faithful, than to attempt to go counter to any instinct, right or wrong.  

...It was a distrust of capitalism...against the prevailing business morality which had advanced to the high estate of a religion ideas of loyalty to a boss, of being on time, of 'boosting' God, country, and company, of wearing a smile, of being 'regular', of eschewing all mental activity that did not have to do with 'getting ahead'-- in short the platitudes of a society but an exploiting very sick, very microscopic entity, of the known world in the interests of money.

D'Arcy believed that what was needed was a development of selflessness, a new set of values to replace the grasping after 'things' that had become the primary
characteristic of American society. He was convinced that the form of Capitalism developing in the United States held no real promise for the American people. D'Arcy realized that he was out of step with the acquisitive nature of the rest of the nation, but he was beginning to define himself.

The marriage relationship may have compounded the problems, but it must also have increased the possibilities not only for conflict, but for companionship. D'Arcy and Joran had been friends, first. While the timing may have been unwise, both D'Arcy and Joran were fascinated with this new world that they were being exposed to, and willing to make the most of all opportunities. They rode the subway and ferries, and walked the streets of New York City.

They spent hours in the libraries. They attended lectures, and free concerts in Central Park. They listened to live broadcasts of the classics on the radio, and went to the theatre when they could afford it. As was his custom, whenever he was going through a difficult period in his life, D'Arcy read a great deal, and wrote poetry. And listening to music, especially violin music, would ease him through his troubles. He continued to write poetry and short stories, and would begin writing his first novel, the Surrounded, at this time.

D'Arcy was always collecting images for his writing in a little notebook that he carried. Every experience fuelled his imagination. In his journal, he would write; "We saw a grand play tonight, ... the things of the spirit have a way of reviving themselves when one suffers; ... that there is no misery like a narrow spirit." This same entry would include notes for a play that he intended to write. Two days later, he would describe an art show
that he had attended at the National Academy. It had been crowded. He had found the paintings to be lacking in depth, the subject, common. At this time, D'Arcy read some articles about architecture and made note to himself to read more about the subject. In his journal, he described the changing seasons, people he met, fine meals; "...For our lunch we had buttered bread, pieces of cheese and liverwurst, boiled eggs, a square of cake, nuts and raisens mixed-- and wine." and conversation, all of which he was able to share with Joran. The McNickles may have faced poverty, but they were rich in experience.

In the summer of 1931, D'Arcy and Joran were able to go France, perhaps, due to an inheritance from D'Arcy's father, who had died in November, 1929. They spent six weeks in France. D'Arcy attended some classes at the University of Grenoble. Both returned with a fair command of the written and spoken French language. This could have been because of the interest both took in meeting and speaking with people. They probably enjoyed many such opportunities. In his journal, D'Arcy entitles an entry "Footnote on starting a business in Paris", in which he describes Madame, landlady of the pensione where they were staying. Madame, who was Swedish, and her husband, Scotch; intended to open a tea-room and gift shop on Boulevard Montparnasse, in Paris. D'Arcy must have spoken at length with this woman about her dream, and her future plans. He outlined, in detail, the cost requirements, initial bank deposit required, lists of questions to address with the business inspector, the architect, and an attorney. This keen observation, thorough research, and record keeping in meticulous detail became a habit of D'Arcy McNickle which would make whatever he wrote not only accurate, but believable, and interesting.
It was true that he had become more educated "...in the ways of living, of meeting people...", but D'Arcy was still not the man he hoped to become. D'Arcy McNickle had a genuine interest in people. This may have been why it was especially difficult for him when he couldn't connect with them. While he felt more comfortable in one-on-one conversation, he remained awkward and shy, and lacked the words for light conversation. And he was certain that his lack of grace was obvious to those around him.

He was especially disturbed by an incident that happened at dinner one evening. Frightened and embarrassed that he could not contribute to the conversation, D'Arcy got up from the table and left the house. Later that evening, he would confide his thoughts to his journal.

This evening, after an embarrassing incident at dinner, I walked alone...It came to me very suddenly as I walked that I am in fact far from achieving ease of manner and of speech. Why embarrassment and fright should seize me I cannot understand. Intellectually, I am at ease with myself. But when I am confronted by strangers and must contribute to the occasion a ghastly ineptness overtakes me. I cannot find a single word to utter-- or if I do I stutter. Up to now I have been leaving these things to take care of themselves-- thinking always that as are natural the crudities of youth would disappear. But I foresee that in a few years time I shall count these younger years wasted if I have not overcome such difficulties. They cannot be left entirely themselves. One must find the means to combat them.  

What he wrote in his journal one week later evidenced that he had not forgotten his discomfort. "Self-possession, consciousness of the self, not of the self as a hindrance and an obstacle, but as a thing of value deserving respect, that is the first lesson to practice." D'Arcy McNickle was becoming the individual that he wanted to become. And he was learning more about being this individual in relationship with another. "...Last night Joran and I had a long talk, at times very sharp and acrid, and for the first time I really
In his journal, D'Arcy would continue to write about his relationship with Joran.

"We have not been exactly conjuvial these past few days. Where is the difficulty? How deeply is it set?" He would record his reasons for concern, and for celebration.

"Yesterday for my birthday Joran and I had a bottle of Barbera between us and an excellent dinner of onion soup and a kind of scala fine.... The wine brought on some very frank talk between us and we discussed the probabilities of finding a publisher...." As difficult as those early years were for D'Arcy McNickle, if it had not been for his responsibilities; the support of, and by Joran and his daughter, he may have only continued trying to sell his first novel, short stories, and poetry. The poem that D'Arcy McNickle wrote for his wife is, perhaps, best evidence that he realized this.

**Gifts to Joran**

The time has passed somehow. We sit here And time has passed with us. How is it so? All lovers should be matched like fighters in A ring where a gong marks off in sharp command The passing time. They can't forget that way To stand up to each other, pass and dodge, Give and take. All games to be played right, Require rules and some impartial one To stand as arbitor of right and wrong. Lovers are lacking that and they forget. These passing months should find us knowing more The sweetness and the thrill of freedom That first we knew exploring and delving into Friendship. Instead, these last months are monotone. We've tried to progress in as straight a line As possible; we've fought off curvature Of effort and resisted undue stress.

This morning you are in the hot city
Bearing the madness of an unusual day.
And I, for a moment only, have time to pause
And think on this. The months have passed and I
Have made no startling gift to bear against
The monotone. I have not made you laugh
with star-tears in your eyes. The time has passed.
The shade is cool but traffic jars the world
On every side with noise and whirling motion.

It seems a little time since spring was just Coming.
O, I could strain for green leaves
To come in spring when trees first count
Their hours in the sun! The time has passed
And it is easy to forget to love.

This morning as I sit a moment here
My thoughts fly through the green world and away.
I go searching everywhere for gifts
to Joran, High Street in Oxford-town,
The ancient villages of France, the broad
Parisian boulevards, I search for words
Of beauty and delight; I think of strange
Alluring scents and things to feel and see,
And have upon the skin, or things to taste--
To find a gift for Joran-- O, to pile
Silks and gems and soft perfume and all
That gives the secret fancy warm delight.

Enough and more my wandering thought brings home!
But these are not enough. There is no end
To fancy. Riches and moral strength
Have limits at their best.
One gift I have for Joran. That today
I have remembered to love.66

At this time, D'Arcy McNickle was learning some important lessons; about the
importance of being true to himself, of trusting his instincts, of relying upon his own,
necessarily educated, judgement, and of (cautiously) following his heart. What he wrote
in his journal, one Sunday evening, in 1932, could well have described his feelings about
the entire ten years he spent in New York City. "...It's like coming of age--reaching the age of discretion, and being cut loose from parental supervision." Perhaps, this period was a necessary passage for him.

In June, 1932, D'Arcy wrote; "Since the first of May we have known that we are to have a child...It is going to be a new and exciting and responsibility-inspiring kind of experience. We're all for it." In 1933, D'Arcy McNickle was unable to pay his income taxes of $23. He had to request an extension. D'Arcy and Joran became parents of a daughter, Antoinette Parenteau McNickle. The November prior to his first child's birth, when registering to vote in the presidential election, D'Arcy Dahlberg officially signed his name as D'Arcy McNickle. For seven months, he had been an automobile salesman. This would be his first, and last 'job' outside of the publishing and writing field. D'Arcy McNickle was becoming the man he wanted to be.

He continued to hope, and to search for a job which would support his family, and himself while he pursued his writing career. When he applied for a position, D'Arcy McNickle wrote about his educational and professional qualifications, and about his writing intentions.

My major was English literature and my work in that department included work in creative writing. My languages were Greek and Latin and I studied French since leaving college. I now read French easily and can carry on a conversation after a fashion. In the sciences I had courses in various phases of biology, including botany, eugenics, evolution, etc., and have since read anthropology. In history I have made greatest progress since leaving the University. I had a course in American history at Columbia but in addition I have read rather widely in that field under my own direction.

...In New York I have taken courses at Columbia University and the New School for Social Research. I have since spent a second term in France, studying at the
University of Grenoble.

My employment has been in the publishing field as an editor and writer. I have been on the staff of Encyclopedia Britanica (1927-28), with the trade journals published by E.F. Houghton & Co. in Philadelphia (1928), and for the past five years I have served as editor with the NCAB (National Cyclopaedia of American Biography) here in New York.

Besides offering me a means of employment, writing has been my main interest for other reasons, principally because it seems to be the thing I am equipped for and because I am interested in writing about the West, the Frontier, not in the romantic vein in which it has been dealt with in the past but with the object of revealing, in fiction, as it has been revealed by historical writers of the past generation, the character which was formed by the impact of the Frontier upon the lives of the people who settled it.

I tell you this is not because I believe it to be directly related to work I might do in the Indian service but because it may help you to decide whether I have ability of a kind that can be used in your department. My suggestion would be that if you can make use of my services in editorial work, that is, in writing reports and overseeing their publication, or in preparing any written matter, that you give me consideration. But I should be willing to try anything you might think me fitted for....

What for another man, could have been an interruption of a writing career due to overwhelming circumstances, was temporary interlude for D'Arcy McNickle. The New York years were a period of adjustment. For every door closed to him, others would open. For every life chapter finished, he would write another. He did not stop learning. Being one accustomed to taking personal responsibility for whatever events happened in his life, D'Arcy McNickle kept moving forward.
ENDNOTES


4. McNickle, D'Arcy. *The Surrounded*. Albuquerque, New Mexico: University of New Mexico Press, 1936, 98. (Described by others as being an 'autobiographical' novel)

5. Ibid., 103-106.


9. Ibid., 36.

10. Ibid., 98.

11. Ibid., 35-36.

12. Ibid., 48-49.

13. Ibid., 100-101.


18. Ibid., 79.

19. Ibid., 77.

20. Ibid., 78.

21. Ibid., 81.

22. Ibid., 81.


29. Ibid., 106.


34. Parker, Dorothy R. *Singing an Indian Song: A Biography of D'Arcy McNickle*. Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1992, 28, 29. (Excerpt from Published article *Sailing, A-Sailing*)

35. Ibid., 28.

36. Ibid., 29.


58. Ibid.

59. Ibid.


61. D'Arcy McNickle, Journal entry, 30 May 1932, D'Arcy McNickle Papers,
The Newberry Library, Chicago, Illinois.


70. Ibid.
CHAPTER 3

SENDING A VOICE - Legacy

Jobs unrelated and...fortuitous circumstance-- Anthropologist

You see, son, the eagle is a person the way it lives; it means it has to do with paying attention to where it is, not the center of the earth especially, but part of it, one part among all parts, and that's only the beginning.

Anonymous Author, American Indian Prose & Poetry

It was becoming difficult to hold his thoughts together. They flew up and away from him and it was necessary to hold on to them. He had to work out what it was like to be in the world, to have an understanding. If death was to come, he wanted to be full of understanding. Even to be smiling at what he understood.

To be born was not enough. To live in the world was not enough. How was it, then? He stood there, swaying slightly, trying to hold it in his mind. When he moved again, he was following his thought once more, but it was getting dim. One had to reach. That was what a man had to do. It pulled him along. He had to reach with his mind into all things, the things that grew from small beginnings and the things that stayed firmly placed and enduring. He had to know more and more, until he himself dissolved and became part of everything else-- and then he would know certainly. Reaching with his mind was part of that, a kind of dissolving into the mist that was once the small seed from which the pine tree would grow and the mountain that endured forever. And a man was there, in the middle, reaching to become part of it. That was something of what it was like to be in the world.

And yet, there was more-- if he could hold fast to it.

D'Arcy McNickle, Wind From An Enemy Sky

The New York years, between 1926 and 1936; which D'Arcy McNickle may
have described as a period of 'confusion' in his life, were his most productive years as a
writer of fiction. Even writing only in his spare time, he was able to write his first novel,
The Surrounded, begun in late 1920's, and published in 1936, and to begin a second.
Although he sold only a few short stories and poems, he continued to write. Much of
what he wrote was about his experiences in New York and Paris. But his three novels,
and the short stories best remembered were about characters and situations which he had
known in his boyhood on the reservation in Montana.

In The Surrounded, the central plot originated in an actual event on the Flathead
Reservation, and many of the characters were drawn from people he had known as a boy.
In the book, the central character, Archilde, expresses D'Arcy's own struggle with identity.
"I wasn't ashamed of my blood to begin with because I never even thought about it. I
didn't think about anything. It is only that I have grown ashamed of it, now that I have
seen things, as it were, for the first time. Now I do want to be somebody else." 3 By the
end of the story, Archilde, no longer ashamed of his mother or his people, has become
proud of his Indian identity. Scholars have labelled The Surrounded D'Arcy McNickle's
most autobiographical novel. The title that D'Arcy chose may have reflected what he
knew would have happened to him if he had stayed on the reservation. He would have
been 'surrounded' by the mountains, by the old traditions, and government institutions.

Both D'Arcy and Joran worked at whatever writing and publishing jobs they
could find. However difficult it was, both remained optimistic and kept faith in what was
important. D'Arcy continued to write in his journal. "Tonight, walking home from the
office at about five-thirty, a wonderful sight. The sky was clear-- that evening blue in
which...is a light wash of gold from the setting sun. Half-way up the sky the thinnest bent
sliver of a moon, ... Sights of this sort, whatever the explanation bother the explanation!--
drive off weariness and too much concern with shadows as nothing else can."4

At this time, D'Arcy began to build his reputation as a writer. And in the process
of writing, he made peace with his past, and began to learn about his tribal origins. His
father was dead, he maintained occasional contact with his sisters, but he re-established a
relationship with his mother that he would maintain until her death. He was learning
about, and creating his own place in history. This period of self-discovery and awareness
was an auspicious prelude to what would prove to be fortuitous circumstance.

While working as editor of the National Cyclopaedia of American Biography, it
was D'Arcy's responsibility to write biographies of the people included in the encyclopedia
based upon the data supplied by them. One of D'Arcy's assignments was to write a
biography of William Gates, an anthropologist associated with Johns Hopkins University.
A specialist in linguistics, Gates was best known for his field work on the Mayan culture in
Mexico. NCAB had solicited him for autobiographical information. D'Arcy wrote Gates'
biography based upon the data he had submitted, and sent it to him for correction before
passing it on to the next level of NCAB editors. Especially impressed by what he read
about Gates, D'Arcy acted impulsively, and against company policy. His gamble was
based upon faith in himself, in future possibilities, and in the kindness of strangers. It took
courage to write what he wrote. The letter would change his life.

McNickle's letter to Gates was important in his career development and a
significant indication of his personality:
My dear Prof. Gates:

This letter has nothing to do with James T. White & Co., however, but I hope it will have something to do with me, and that you will not count it an imposition-- that you will withhold it from the waste paper basket at least until you have read it.

In the beginning let me say that I have strong personal reasons for being attracted by the work you are doing and by the kind of letters you write. To explain about the work-- my interest is that of one of the original Americans hounded into the earth who sees, at last, the beginning of a wholly devoted and wholly sincere effort to recreate the glory that was in these Americas before Christian barbarians came to impose a 'higher' civilization upon the innocents. I say devoted because no one would spend the years you have given up to work except in devotion, and I saw sincere because it is scientific, that is to say exacting, unexhibitionary, and removed from the sentimental and inept efforts that have been made in behalf of the Indians in the past and which have succeeded only in making the uplifters ridiculous and sinking the victim into deeper obscurity. I am an Indian then, a breed, rather, for I had a Scotch-Irish father and a French-Canadian (that is French-Cree) mother. I do not know the proportion in which the bloods are mixed on my mother's side, and probably no one will ever resolve the question, for her people were a long time beyond the pale in the United States and in Canada. Her father was one of Louis Riel's rebels in the uprisings of 1873 and 1885 and was finally chased off British soil with a bounty on his
head. He died in poverty, his large ranch and herds of stock swallowed up in the onward rush.

I said I was interested in your letters also, and by that I mean that vigorous, gristled writing always interests me-- because writing is my hope and my only tool. By writing I mean that supreme effort of mind and emotion and character and experience to understand and set forth the meaning of that universe which not God but the mind of man has created. The training is arduous and the results, not in public recognition but in self-satisfaction, are meager. As for myself, I am still in the training period, but perhaps one always is. I might better put it this way: I am just thirty and as yet have not published since leaving college; I have wasted few of the hours spared from bread-winning, but even so results are slow and I have only one book (a fictionalized study of the development of an Indian boy), a long narrative poem, and scattering stories and poems to show for the last five years (nothing before then mattered); publishers have come awfully near taking the book, at least ten have taken the time to write out their reasons for rejection, no small concession on their part, and some have called me in to talk it over. I tell you this not out of some idleness but to indicate that the writing is not hopelessly bad (not that publishers are capable of judging good writing in any case), a fact which could have been better indicated by quoting the professors who have sworn by me-- which I shall spare you.

By this time you are wondering what I am up to, and I don't know how to put it. I want to say, impulsively, that I should like to offer my services to the work you are carrying on, but that I know would be a piece of impudence. I have not the special training which the work requires and I don't believe I have the kind of mentality which gets pleasure out of unknotting perplexities. I only get knotted up instead. But I wonder if there might be something I could do, if you should find this application creditable. Would it be possible, for instance, to compile a tentative history of the Maya people from information you have thus far uncovered? Are there any separate tales or episodes which might be exhumed and saved from a second burial in a Ph.D. thesis? I could not undertake to write learnedly in the field, but neither do I mean to vulgarize the material for Boy Scout publications and their kind. In brief, is there any material that might be dealt with creatively-- made alive? Understand, I have my own resources as to material. I am not looking for a 'field' to exploit. I have never taken a step for the sake of finding 'local color' nor pried into one person's affairs for the sake of getting a 'character'. If
writing does not emerge naturally from one's experiences it can serve no purpose except to engulf people more profoundly in the meaninglessness in which most of them live.

I should add in closing that I have a wife and a baby girl (three months old and a wonder) and I can't go wandering off the main line without seeing food and shelter ahead. Perhaps I am asking for a steady job, and perhaps on reading this you will say what a hell of a nerve! Even so, I hope you will see that I have written out of admiration of your work and your spirit, and the idea, unexpected as it must seem, would never have occurred to me if your letters were not so full of unexpectedness-- a quality which I am sure you prize. Forgive the liberty and believe me,

Sincerely yours,

D'Arcy McNickle

The friendly chattiness of the letter was characteristic of D'Arcy, but William Gates, however much admired, was a stranger to him. D'Arcy was thirty, and yet remained passionate in his pursuit of learning and naive enough to believe that he only had to state what he wanted to make it happen. D'Arcy McNickle did know what he wanted exactly, and was unafraid to go in pursuit of it. He did not hear back from Gates right away, but the response to his letter was enthusiastic. "Of course I liked your letter, every damned word of it; all you say about your people's firstness, and all that. Also, what I very much liked was the way you put your pen on the critical descriptive word of the guts of things. You first hit it when you acknowledged to me that the necessary 'official' statement (as prepared for the NCAB biography) just wan't what for."6

Boldness and some flattery may have garnered kind answer to his missive, but the answer was not as good regarding his inquiry of an available job. The only opportunities
at this time were in the field, and D'Arcy was not able or willing to leave his family. Gates apologized, "Do I thus reward your 'hell of a nerve'”, and he offered encouragement.

Concern for Indians was growing, and there would be more jobs created. D'Arcy's letter seems to have impressed Gates enough to make him a promise. "Some day, when chance allows, I shall have a fine set-to of council-fire talk if I can meet you.”

D'Arcy had written Gates in March and received no reply until May. While he did not lose hope during that time, he continued to look for opportunity. In early September, 1935, D'Arcy received notice that his application had been accepted by the new Federal Writers Project, organized under the Works Progress Administration, part of Franklin D. Roosevelt's 'New Deal'. He would be involved in writing and editing the new State Guide series, working primarily with information relating to Indians and anthropology. This was his opportunity to work under a trained anthropologist, and what he hoped would result in a permanent job at the Bureau of Indian Affairs, BIA. He wrote a letter to Constance Skinner, an editor who had offered encouragement in lieu of a contract for his novel. "We're going to have a lot of Indian material and I'll have a chance to take a hand in it, probably working under a trained anthropologist,…And this, as I have just learned, will probably result in a permanent job at the Indian Office." He was assigned to a position in the administrative office. D'Arcy McNickle, and his family moved to Washington, D.C. At an annual salary of twenty-six hundred dollars, he was wealthier than he had ever been, and beginning on still another adventure.

At this time, he wrote a letter to John Collier, Commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs of the Department of the Interior. Like the letter he had written to William
Gates, D'Arcy was plain spoken and direct.

Mr. John Collier, I have recently read in your report to the Secretary of the Interior that it is to be the policy of the Indian Bureau to employ Indians wherever possible in conducting the affairs of the Indian service. As I am able to qualify on the score of being part Indian, I am submitting this brief account of my training and experience in the hope that you may find me otherwise qualified for a place in the service...

The process of making application for employment to this government bureau must have been complex. D'Arcy wrote long letters outlining his educational and job experience, and his goals. In response to one required questionnaire, he wrote that he was one-quarter Flathead Indian, enrolled and allotted. He admitted to having a slight musical gift. He wrote that he enjoyed the theatre, baseball, fishing and outdoor life. His preferred reading was books about the history of the Northwest. He read any magazines that came his way. A question about what he did between the ages of twelve and twenty-one, he answered that he had been a farm worker, garage helper, steamboat fireman, railroad worker, logger and elevator operator. This may be more evidence of D'Arcy's sense of humor than of his experience. While such work history is possible, there is no record of it. In answer to the final question, "Give any further information about yourself which you think significant," he answered, "You have plumbed the depths."

His patience and sense of humor is evidenced by the answers he makes to yet another questionnaire sent him about his habits.

I have tried to do justice to the question blank you sent me and must confess I found it a formidable undertaking. Some of the questions baffle, for example, those dealing with intoxicating beverages. I am very fond of wine and beer with my meals, but to say that I drink intoxicating beverages steadily sounds as if I should rate myself a confirmed toper. I have been intoxicated but once or twice in my life, but never at all since coming to the age of reason...
He completed all required forms, mailed in the application, and he heard nothing.

My dear Mr. Collier:

Since I have heard nothing further from the application which I filed with the Department last year I assume that it has not been possible to find a use for my services. I hope however that I have not been definitely dropped from consideration. I do feel that, specialized as has been my experience, it has not entirely disqualified me for work with the Indians. May I have the pleasure of hearing from you.

Very truly yours,

D'Arcy McNickle

...The possibility that I might receive an appointment to the Indian Service is of course pleasant news. If meantime you discover a temporary position which I might fill please let me know of it. My situation is desperate.

Very truly yours,

D'Arcy McNickle

And finally, the letter that would lead to another beginning for D'Arcy McNickle.

From John Collier to D'Arcy McNickle on February 27, 1935:

Can you arrange to come to Washington very soon for a personal interview? Please let us know,...the date you can come.

This time also brought an ending. The McNickles' move to Washington and their improved financial situation did not alleviate the problems that had been building in their marriage. D'Arcy and Joran were divorced in 1938. He got custody of daughter, Antoinette. McNickle's journals for much of this time are missing. He may not have had much time to record his thoughts. In less than a year, D'Arcy married Roma Kauffman, an accomplished writer and editor for the United States Office of Education, whom he had met in the course of his work for the Federal Writers Project.
In 1940, D'Arcy and Roma's daughter, Kathleen was born. The family lived comfortably on D'Arcy's federal income. When he was home, he worked in his garden, and he still enjoyed reading. He continued to write. Early in his marriage to Joran, he had written in his journal: "a woman sits quietly by while men talk-- a look of amiability on her face-- knowing well that when men's talk has grown stale and they have arrived nowhere they will turn to her with a feeling of relief and think 'Ah here she sits, pleasant and refreshing! This is the best of all!' D'Arcy and Roma would divorce in 1967. Perhaps, he was home too seldom. His employment with the BIA would be only the beginning of an increasingly active professional schedule.

In 1936, D'Arcy was hired as an administrative assistant to John Collier, Commissioner of Indian Affairs. His application had been well timed. The Indian Reorganization Act had passed in 1934, and Collier was looking for articulate people who could explain the complicated process to both Indians and whites. Many Indians were suspicious of what they perceived as just one more policy imposed on them by the BIA. Collier believed that D'Arcy, being Indian, might be especially effective in explaining the new program to various tribes and allaying their suspicion.

The Indian Reorganization Act, the 'New Deal' applied to the American Indians, encouraged them to revitalize their cultures, traditions, and institutions. It ended the allotment policy that had stripped Indians of their lands, and gave tribes the opportunity to organize self-governing systems that would be recognized as legal entity by the federal government. It incorporated tribal institutions and established a credit fund for education and medical improvement.
Not long after he was hired, McNickle was sent to Montana and North Dakota to talk to the 'landless' Indians along the Canadian border, many of whom were Me'tis like himself. His efforts on their behalf resulted in the first of a number of articles he would write for the BIA newsletter publication, *Indians at Work*. In the course of his work, he was interviewed by a reporter from The Billings Gazette. In an article entitled "Government Official Encourages Indians Toward Self-Sufficiency," McNickle explains his belief.

D'Arcy McNickle, field representative for the commissioner of Indian Affairs, asserted in an interview: 'There is no logical reason to doubt that, in time, the Indians of the United States will become largely self-governing and productively self-supporting.

We see the trend on every side. In Montana alone, most of the tribes...have the necessary where-with-all to ultimately accomplish this end...The evil of the old system of administration,...was that Indians everywhere had come to look to Washington for the answer to their every problem.

The Great White Father-- far away from the problem as he was-- sometimes made the wrong decision simply because he lacked the local background necessary for a just solution. The Indian is a permanent American-- and a good American. 16

Much of McNickle's work for the Bureau was done in the field. When he first began working for the government, he had looked forward to associating with the anthropologists who were being brought into the Bureau to assist in the reorganization process. Prior to Collier's term, the BIA had been staffed by political appointees rather than by those with interest or experience in dealing with Indians. Collier established the Applied Anthropology Unit, (AAU) as a division of the BIA. Dismantled one year later because bureaucrats objected to the entry of social scientists, the research done helped to make non-Indian social scientists recognize Indians as a distinct culture, with the result
being increased establishment of programs beneficial to the Indians.

John Collier hoped that the social scientists would be able to advise the Bureau about the contemporary social organization of each group of Indians that wanted to organize under the Indian Reorganization Act, so that each constitution drawn up could be based upon the actual social life of the group. D'Arcy enjoyed his work in both public relations and tribal relations. What he learned about Indian affairs would not only contribute to his own knowledge and effectiveness, but also provided a wealth of information for his writing of articles and books.

McNickle especially enjoyed his work with William Gates and prominent anthropologists from the University of Chicago. By using social science techniques, the anthropologists hoped to be able to achieve some degree of understanding of the dynamics of individual personality formation, and its relation to the larger society. Results of this work would be published as a series of tribal monographs and then synthesized into a more general study of implication and application. They would attempt to apply the field studies to administrative policies and practice so that the future development of Indian societies could take place from a base of Indian culture. D'Arcy was able to observe at first hand the role anticipated for professional anthropologists, as well as the difficulties they faced in trying to initiate effective change toward tribal self-government.

McNickle developed a reputation as a respected anthropologist, though not formally educated, but experience trained. In 1966, some thirty years later, he would be named to organize and direct the newly established Anthropology Department at the University of Saskatchewan at Regina. In a letter he wrote to a colleague at this time,
D'Arcy McNickle stipulated a definition for the science of anthropology and described its purpose.

I presume that your question, 'What is the focal point or basic question which each discipline tries to answer?' is in this instance directed to anthropology.

The question could, of course, be answered at length, but it should suffice to say that anthropology is primarily concerned with the comparative study of man in a cultural setting. What this means is that anthropology attempts to demonstrate to students the universals and range of variation in life-ways (i.e. 'cultures'), the biological-cultural components of human development, and the inter-relationship between language and other aspects of culture. A number of sub-disciplines have developed in anthropology, but essentially they are all concerned with descriptions of man as defined within these dimensions, which cover all of man's physical, social and psychic experiences.17

In another letter he wrote to a colleague: "No people should have to depend on another and possibly hostile party to give its account of the world."18 D'Arcy realized that the greatest disadvantage American Indians had in dealing with the incoming Europeans had been their lack of written history, some record of their achievements, their insights and their values. He intended to be only the first among many future Indian anthropologists and historians.

**BIA and Pan-Indian Affairs**

With many fathers
I leave my voice of the past
not speaking is not knowing.

Gordon D. Henry, Jr., *Haiku*19

The Americans called Indians wrote no histories, and their past was only dimly told in oral tradition and legend. When strangers came to write about the land that had been theirs, the Indians somehow turned into flora and fauna and were hardly visible as men. Their global experience had been reduced to scattered footnotes in world
D'Arcy McNickle shared John Collier's antipathy toward American consumerism, and his desire to restore the Indian's political and social autonomy, but he did not share Collier's romantic vision of the non-materialistic value system of Indian communities as the ultimate hope of mankind. D'Arcy believed that Indians, like other Americans, should have access to all possible opportunities for self-realization, individually and collectively. If Indian people chose to maintain tribal identity and tradition, D'Arcy would fight to help them keep their land and culture. If they chose to assimilate into 'white' society, he would assist them in achieving that goal. His chosen obligation was to ensure freedom of choice. D'Arcy supported Collier's reforms because he believed that they were moving in the right direction. Collier greatly respected McNickle, describing him as a true man of letters and a scholar. He was impressed with D'Arcy's talent for writing. He especially valued him as a peacemaker. John Collier could be abrupt, abrasive, dogmatic, and impatient with those who disagreed with him, while D'Arcy recognized that both sides of any issue possessed a measure of truth. These qualities made D'Arcy McNickle an especially effective administrator.

In 1939, Collier appointed D'Arcy as one of several Indian delegates to attend the Canadian Conference on North American Indians that was jointly hosted by the University of Toronto and Yale University. This conference, which was overshadowed in the news of Hitler's invasion of Poland, was important because the Indian delegates from both the United States and Canada staged a walkout on the last day. The Indian delegates had
began to realize that even though they were Indians, they had become so acculturated that they no longer truly represented their fellow tribal members who still lived on the reservations. They decided to meet as a separate group and went on record calling for an all-Indian conference on Indian welfare, to be limited to Indian leaders actually living among the Indian people.

Collier's paternalistic policy encouraged the establishment of Indian organizations in the hope of expediting the self-realization process. Although he continued in his support of BIA policy, D'Arcy McNickle was beginning to find his own voice. He had grown secure enough in his own Indian identity to begin to support pan-Indian effort. Indians who were most familiar with the country's political institutions believed that only a united front could provide a significant voice.

In November, 1944, a new organization, the National Congress of American Indians, NCAI, met for the first time in Denver's Cosmopolitan Hotel. Eighty delegates, from thirty tribes, and twenty-seven states attended. They came as individuals, not as tribal representatives.

American Indian identity being primarily tribal, not 'Indian', there was initially tribal resistance to a pan-Indian (those defined as 'Indian' sharing an Indian identity vs specific tribal identity) organization. The NCAI's constitution, which McNickle helped to write, was modeled after the constitution of the Federal Employees Union No. 780 in Chicago. Its preamble stated the group's objectives: "...in order to secure the rights and benefits to which we are entitled under the laws of the United States,...to enlighten the public toward a better understanding of the Indian race; to preserve Indian cultural values;
to seek an equitable adjustment of tribal affairs; to secure and to preserve rights under Indian treaties...and otherwise to promote the common welfare of the American Indians..."21 The NCAI would represent American Indians in nonpartisan political issues, and advise, recommend, teach and promote the Indian point of view before Congress. Its program also included the potential for action in Indian education, research and welfare.

The establishment of the Indian Claims Commission Act of 1946, which allowed compensation for tribal land claims, provided opportunities for the founders of the NCAI to act on behalf of all tribes. The push toward termination in the 1950's, further stimulated the growth of the NCAI's political stature as it repeatedly lobbied against termination legislation, which cut off various tribes from federal support. D'Arcy would continue to play an active role in the NCAI for years; speaking, writing and representing the organization in its various lobbying activities during the 1950's.

With other Indian leaders, D'Arcy McNickle was looking ahead, to a time when organized Indian opinion might be sought by members of Congress, by the press, by other citizen organizations and by the BIA. He worked within the existing bureaucracy, all the time looking forward to a future time when Indians' influence would be felt within it. He had the opportunity to influence American Indians and federal legislation in regard to American Indians. D'Arcy McNickle realized the importance of the development of an Indian voice.

In his work for John Collier, D'Arcy McNickle had found his mission, the cause that would claim his devotion for the rest of his life. He would include description of his accomplishments with the BIA as part of his curriculum vitae, some forty years later.
For sixteen years (1936-1952) I was a staff member in the Bureau of Indian Affairs, serving variously as administrative assistant, field representative for the commissioner, assistant to the commissioner, and director of tribal relations.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs during the John Collier regime pioneered in action research, and as a staff member I assisted in facilitating programs or activities in which social science concepts were applied to field problems. At the outset of the Collier administration, the Bureau established an Applied Anthropology unit which, among other assignments, assembled ethnological data on Indian tribes seeking to organize under written constitution. This anthropological unit operated within the tribal relations branch, of which ultimately I became director.

In the final four years of the Collier administration, which ran from 1933 to 1945, the Bureau collaborated with the Committee on Human Development of the University of Chicago in an unprecedented research project designed to study comparatively the development of personality in five different tribes, using the total physical and social environment as a reference frame. The study was to be the initial step in a systematic evaluation of Indian service administration. It resulted immediately in publications on the Hopi, Navajo, Sioux, and Papago tribes and on problems of administration. The findings and the methods of this project, with which I was administratively associated, profoundly effected my understanding of man and society, on the broad plane; and the white man-Indian relationship, as an immediate concern.

This was the first time in its history that the Indian Bureau ever attempted to make a scientific study of the impact on Indian societies of government policies and program operations. Unfortunately, John Collier retired from the commissionership before the project findings could be fully related to administrative practices.

The basic objectives of Indian affairs administration were radically modified after 1950. The concern for the Indian as a social being and the persistent searching for method in human relations programs which characterized the Collier regime were abandoned in favor of a policy of coercive assimilation of the Indian individual and the liquidation of the Indian tribes and their trust property.

In his Book, *Indians and Other Americans: Two Ways of Life Meet*, D'Arcy McNickle wrote "The unfulfilled dreams of the Indians of this country is that they will be permitted at last to make the primary decisions affecting their lives and their property. Not that their decisions will be superior to those made by men possibly more skillful, but..."
that, being their decisions, the people will be content to live with them and to change them as experience teaches the desirability of change." American Indians, like every people, like every individual, seek to be masters of their own destiny, with a voice of their own which would be heard.

**Building a Future**

The men...spoke little, occasionally a light remark broke into laughter. One would sing, then another, always softly, as if thoughts could not keep a song for long...

D'Arcy McNickle, *Wind From An Enemy Sky*

But instead of answering, he began to sing....The others took up the refrain, softly, then in fuller voice. It was the song...the beginning...

D'Arcy McNickle, *Wind From An Enemy Sky*

...In recent years leading newspaper columnists have referred to Indian reservations as concentration camps and have urged their abolition. Politicians have made speeches about 'emancipating' the Indians, making them 'first class' citizens. Congress in 1953 laid down its own guiding policy, which is that 'at the earliest possible time' the Indians of certain tribes and eventually all Indians in the United States 'should be freed from federal supervision and control and from all disabilities and limitations especially applicable to Indians.

Statements and proposals such as these are a recognition of the bad practices of the past; but they would wipe out the past by destroying the future for the Indian people.

D'Arcy McNickle, *Indians and Other Americans: Two Ways of Life Meet*

In his work with the Bureau of Indian Affairs, D'Arcy McNickle had used his position to enable, encourage and empower American Indians as a cultural group divided into tribes. As he became more knowledgeable about history, and began to realize the future challenges ahead, he worked to unite Indians of all tribes through generation of a
Pan-Indian mentality so that a stronger Indian voice would be represented, and better heard. When the bureaucracy in which he worked toward this end began to change in character, D'Arcy realized that it would be his responsibility to prepare individuals, as leaders, in representation of their people.

What D'Arcy had learned during his tenure at the BIA prepared him to do the work he thought most important. He had never learned to like the meetings required of him in his former position. He would confide in his journal, "...seems they are in Heaven, sitting around a director's table!" But he realized that as means to an end, they would continue to be necessary. No longer would he write that "...a ghastly ineptness overcomes me. I cannot find a single word to utter..." Not only would D'Arcy be involved in many meetings in the course of his work as an administrator, and in his career. He would also teach college, present papers, and speak at professional meetings. Always evident in his speech and writing were his knowledge, his humility, and his sense of humor. His introduction to a speech he made toward the end of his career is an example of this:

...Whoever started the practice of after-dinner speaking was not a friend of mankind. What most of us prefer to do after a good evening meal is take off our shoes and fall asleep in front of the T.V. So if any of you feel like sleeping, I'll try not to disturb you.

But I've been away from the Flathead country for 50 years, and I feel that I should give some kind of an account of those years. I don't want to talk in terms of personal reminiscence-- that would be very boring. What I'd rather do is share with you some of the things I have learned-- the observations I've made. And I'd like to organize it around one of the themes of your conference-- the integration of Indian cultures and values into the educational processes...

He may have remained uncomfortable but D'Arcy McNickle had become knowledgeable and self-confident. He realized how important it was to educate and
empower an individual. It was necessary beginning of powerful possibilities. D'Arcy McNickle was an example of this.

When he resigned from the Bureau in 1952, D'Arcy became director of American Indian Development, created by the NCAI, a project which would later be incorporated and made tax exempt. As stated in its first annual report, its purpose was: "...concerned with helping the Indian people of the United States to find and use the material resources and the leadership which exists in their communities." D'Arcy's last position with the BIA had been concerned with overseeing financial self-help programs and a revolving credit fund. With a government climate that was unwilling to support self-help programs, he realized what was necessary would be a private organization set up to direct private money into programs which emphasized development and self-determination at the community level. American Indian Development, Inc., (AID) financed leadership training and group development in Indian communities. D'Arcy explained the project:

The method at first pursued was a two-week workshop, organized for the benefit of the Indian leaders in a region or in a local community. In these workshops we described and analyzed reservation problems, discussed the dynamics of motivation, and demonstrated community work methods. After two years it became apparent that our efforts were too scattered to be effective and we looked for a single community in which we could work intensively over a period of years. This decision brought us eventually to Crownpoint, New Mexico, the administrative center for the eastern Navajos who live in New Mexico beyond the Navajo reservation boundary. Our work in this community covered the seven-year period, 1953-1960, ...

The activities initiated at Crownpoint proceeded from the assumption that people suffer impairment when decision making is denied them; and conversely, they live and grow when decision making is restored or enlarged.

Progress reports were issued quarterly and annually while the project operated. These need to be evaluated, along with an accumulation of field notes and special
studies on leadership in the area. 31

This was a serious program which combined research and action in the field. What made it different from any other social program was the attempt of administering it from an Indian perspective; community study was made, including analysis of what was necessary to make each particular community and people more effective at self-governance. No assistance was provided unless it was specifically requested by the local people. AID activity was a community effort not paternalistic hand-out, social welfare program.

At Crownpoint, a community house was built and dedicated where community meetings would be held to discuss tribal law codes and tribal membership; current issues about land ownership, fencing problems and water rights, school plans, and concerns about government.

McNickle was surprised, and pleased that the committees focused on genuine needs and carried through to positive solutions. The Navajo Development Committee was used as the example of what people on other reservations might accomplish by working together. He wrote about the project:

The immediate past history of the eastern Navajos provided a favorable testing ground for the hypothesis from which we started-- that people are adversely affected when decision making is denied them. Almost twenty years before our operation began at Crownpoint, the administrative headquarters which the Bureau had operated there since 1908 was closed and the functions transferred to a new central headquarters at Window Rock, Arizona, eighty-five miles to the west. The tribal court and tribal police were moved out of Crownpoint, for a different set of reasons, and centered at Fort Defiance, Arizona, ninety miles to the west. The boarding school and hospital remained in operation, but without close supervision and without adequate maintenance funds, these services deteriorated rapidly.
The Navajos were not consulted as these moves were planned and carried out. To intensify the feeling of injury, a severe and prolonged drought made necessary a drastic livestock reduction program. The Navajos found themselves under orders to cull and reduce their herds of sheep and goats, on which they depended for sustenance, and they were not consulted as to how and when these steps should be taken.

...Our role was strictly advisory. We could act only as we were invited to act; and therefore, only as the people saw the need to take action....

Within our defined limitations, community action of considerable scope resulted: a meeting house of stone construction was erected, with volunteer labor; a management committee of local leaders expanded this meeting house into a true community center offering a variety of programs; a needed community laundry was established and built into a small community business; the leaders from many outlying districts joined together by meeting regularly at Crownpoint, and through their concerted action they secured the re-establishment of their administrative headquarters and an enlarged tribal court and police force.32

In a letter McNickle wrote to Helen Peterson an Oglala Sioux, at NCAI's Washington office,

I am constantly astonished at the progress we are making in winning the friendship of the people in this area, and even more astonishing is the speed at which these leaders are moving into action. For years the area...has been regarded as hopelessly divided and hostile. I am beginning to realize that the divisions within the group resulted from government policies and that the hostility, if there was such, was directed at the government. We have found from the beginning a great eagerness on the part of the leaders to be recognized and to be used in a responsible way.33

While he was sincerely committed to community projects, D'Arcy McNickle continued to write, hoping that what he wrote would not only entertain but educate his readers. He continued to publish many articles on Indian history, and he wrote two books. In 1954, Runner in the Sun: a Story of Indian Maize was published as part of a series of juvenile historical novels. With this book, D'Arcy was reaching a younger audience.

Based upon sound anthropological research, Runner in the Sun is set in the pre-
Columbian Southwest, is about the adventures of a boy named Salt, who journeys to the Aztec cities in search of new knowledge for his people. What happens to him on his journey is not as important as that he has the courage to make it, remembers what the elders have taught him about how to conduct himself while making it, and remains open to new knowledge; returning as a wise leader of his people. American Indian author, James Ruppert commented upon McNickle's message within this novel.

Salt learns to trust the dreams of the elders, his own instincts about his new and different wife, and his desire to act for the good of his people.

In his portrayal of the conflict which ultimately brings about cultural progress, McNickle is careful to show that those who desire personal power and advantage are linked with fear and that fear begets witchcraft. To stand for the good of the people does not mean child-like obedience to tradition. It can mean finding the new and producing positive change. Of course, McNickle knew this to be true from his years of community development work, and he believed it was an idea contemporary Indian leaders needed to understand fully. In Runner in the Sun, the change that comes about is clearly based on a reaffirmation of cultural values brought into the open through resolution of internal dissension.

To counterpoint these images of positive change, McNickle offers a picture of the corrupt Aztec civilization flourishing on murder and domination. The Aztecs have destroyed and perverted the civilized accomplishments of their predecessors, the Mayas and other Central American groups, rather than adapting them for the good of all. At one point Salt asks, 'Shouldn't a highly civilized people learn to live in peace?' Of course the Aztecs did not, but then neither did the European settlers of the Americas. Throughout this fine, young adult, historical novel, McNickle expresses timely contemporary and historical insights.

With social journalist, Harold Fey, McNickle wrote Indians and Other Americans: Two Ways of Life Meet. The book attempted to answer the question raised by the authors in the first chapter. "Why has failure so clouded white/Indian relations?" It reviewed the mistakes of federal Indian policy in the past, outlined and described John
Collier's reforms, and critiqued the BIA policies of the post-war Eisenhower years.

D'Arcy tied in what he learned from his experience in the field, and from his reading to what he wrote; both fiction and nonfiction. His goal was always to generate increased knowledge and understanding. D'Arcy McNickle firmly believed, especially for Native Americans, that only by better understanding the past, could the future be built. This had worked for him in his own life, and he felt a responsibility to pass on to others his hard-earned wisdom. None of his novels were a commercial success, neither were his histories. All of his writing was highly praised by colleagues, those prominent in their fields. And because of D'Arcy's own influence, his novels would be reprinted and continue to be analyzed, and begin to be more widely read. His histories have yet to be appreciated for their contribution to better understanding American Indians and their true importance in historical context.

The letter that ethnologist, Alexander H. Leighton, a Professor at Cornell University wrote to publisher, Stanley Chambers at J.B. Lippencott, Co., made reference to the non-fiction Work, They Came Here First: the Epic of the American Indian but what he wrote could just as easily describe the importance of other books authored by D'Arcy McNickle.

Many thanks for sending me a copy of Mr. McNickle's book. It is extremely well written and has the moving quality of epic poetry. Due to the subject it is inevitably, a tragedy, but the tragedy is not overdone. The past is not lamented, but rather the Indian of today is placed in perspective. We see his problems and those of the nation that contains him and we see the need for a solution based on individual human dignity, not might as right.

Everyone interested in world problems should read this book. In it one can see the position of the small nation in relation to the large and gain understanding that is
rarely possessed by the members of great nations. Until we solve the problems we
did not and have not solved regarding the Indian, there can be little hope of security
in small nations. Without security in small nations there can be no honesty, no
democracy and no security in the world.

You may use these remarks as seems best to you in promoting the sale of the book.
I believe it ought to be widely read.35

Renown was not particularly important to D'Arcy McNickle. What was
important, was that through what he said, what he did, what he wrote, he made a great
many people aware of the need to understand, and he made a path by which a great many
more people would continue to understand Native Americans’ place in history.

American Indian Historian

D'Arcy struck one theme well worthy of reflection, throughout the last four decades
of his life. He observed that, despite what seemed on the surface to be massive and
rapid breakdown in Indian cultures across the continent, an essential core of cultural
integrity was being maintained....D'Arcy was one of only a handful of scholars who
knew this would always be so, and he knew this because it was his own story that he
was telling.

James Ruppert, D’Arcy McNickle36

Indeed, if D'Arcy lived for anything, he lived to reduce that awful strangeness which
has for so long separated Indian and white on this hemisphere.

James Ruppert, D’Arcy McNickle37

That he could see and have compassion for both sides in the historical tragedy of
Indian-white relations is not to suggest that Mr. McNickle was without passion. On
the contrary, he was a man of great passionate concern. It was a concern not only
for his own particular people, but also for all First Americans. And his histories
reveal that passion....Indeed, so far as I know, everything he wrote was about the
First Americans, their culture, and their history. Their plight as the surrounded
people absorbed his life.

Lawrence W. Towner, Past Imperfect. Essays on History, Libraries, and the
Humanities38
In our American way, to understand is to want to do something. It is not our purpose to write an argument for a particular course of action, but rather to suggest a point of view out of which action may grow...

But to have understanding is a first consideration. The facts are all about us; we need to pull them together, sort them out, and try to answer these natural questions: Who are the Indians and what is their status in contemporary American society? What happened to them after discovery and settlement by Europeans? How has the United States tried to help these firstcomers and what is now being attempted in this line? Why has failure so clouded the record of government-Indian relations?

D'Arcy McNickle, *Indians and Other Americans: Two Ways of Life Meet* 39

"Before I resigned from the Bureau in 1952, I wrote the Indian volume ("They Came Here First,"...) for the *Peoples of America* series,...The volume summarizes the archaeological evidence bearing on the antiquity of man in the Americas; it narrates briefly the experiences of the various European nations in their discoveries and colonizing efforts in the New World, and it traces the development of United States policy in its relations with the Indian people." 40

McNickle's work with the BIA allowed him access to a variety of sources otherwise unavailable. Current anthropological and archaeological data, federal legislation, and reports from congressional debates enabled him to write a comprehensive history of the social interaction between whites and Indians. Throughout this book, as in all of his writing, he tried to convince the reader to value and understand the perspectives of American Indian cultures. He tried to shatter common stereotypes about American Indians, and about Indian history. And he hoped to replace the popular image of the Indian as a wild man with a portrayal of more realistic, and varied American Indian experience. As author, James Ruppert, explains:
This effort to explain an Indian perspective brought him to an important definition of culture: not as a static clinging to the past, but as a dynamic struggle between forces favoring the status quo and forces favoring change. He believed that solutions found inside any group reaffirmed cultural values and defined culture as a constantly developing way of life. If this dynamic were upset and overpowered, cultural deterioration took place. McNickle had covered much of the same ground in *The Surrounded*, but here his ideas were given organization and documentation.41

During his tenure at the BIA, especially after John Collier resigned; when he may have had to choose his words carefully, at meetings, and in the course of his work, D'Arcy found his voice in his writing of non-fiction. As an American Indian historian, D'Arcy McNickle's understanding of what it meant to be Indian provided a view of the national Indian experience unique among historians. One of the first Indian historians and anthropologists, McNickle's writing changed both Indians' and non-Indians' perspective of history, and of Indian history. He wrote five non-fiction books; four cultural histories, and one biography.

Unlike his fiction, which remained long out of print after first publication, McNickle's non-fiction books were not only well-received, but remained in circulation. This could well have been due to the fact that while D'Arcy was still ahead of his time as author of American Indian fiction, in its acceptance by a wide audience. His first Novel, *The Surrounded*, was published in 1936, and his second Novel, *Runner in the Sun: a Story of Indian Maize*, in 1954. The eighteen years between publication of his books, McNickle spent in the field. He was actively working within the Native American community educating, encouraging and enabling others.

D'Arcy McNickle was certainly one of the first American Indian novelists. It was not until 1969, that N. Scott Momaday's novel, *House Made of Dawn* won the Pulitzer
Prize. Momaday’s book became the first internationally recognized novel by an American Indian. D’Arcy McNickle’s historical studies of the American Indians were widely read. His own efforts to increase awareness and knowledge of American Indians could have been reason for this. His work as an anthropologist, and with the BIA had made for an increased awareness of American Indians, especially by scholars, non-Indian and Indian, who would credit his writing as being important contribution to historical record.

McNickle’s depth of detailed historical knowledge, style of narrative flow, and wry sense of humor were evidenced in all of his writing. As an historian, McNickle educated his readers. He was able to make them aware of what may have been formerly controversial issues through skillful use of anecdote. There was no blame laid, no accusations made, no obvious agenda. D’Arcy was a teller of stories which revealed the humanity, the good and the bad, of the individuals involved. The introduction he wrote for his book, Indians and Other Americans: Two Ways of Life Meet is best evidence of his writing style:

This is a book about promises: some that were never uttered but filled the air, some uttered and broken, and some that remain as a dream to be fulfilled.

It is a book about people-- about Indians. And therefore it is a book about change; how change is resisted and how, at times, it is accepted. In this matter of change, people are like the grass. They toss and sway and even seem to flow before the forces that make for change, as grass bows to the wind. But when the rude force moves on, people are found still rooted in the soil of the past. Again, like grass, people produce seed; and the seed will fly with the wind and, finding a friendly soil and climate, start a new generation. To change, yet to remain steadfast-- that would seem to be the need of all living things.

The Indian people of the United States demonstrate such a need. This book will describe some of the ways in which change and resistance have worked in the lives of individuals and in tribal groups. To describe such processes should contribute to
understanding, and would be reason enough for a book about Indians— but there are other strong reasons.

A commissioner of Indian affairs of fifty years ago, Francis E. Leupp, made a discovery which deserves to be recorded here. As a public official often vexed by a badly informed public, the episode doubtless brought a certain gleam to his eye. Who knows how often that gleam may have reappeared in the eyes of Mr. Leupp's successors!

The incident described by Commissioner Leupp had its beginning in a report unanimously adopted in 1909 at a gathering of representatives of several missionary boards working in the Indian country. The meeting concluded that 'the sun dance and certain other Indian dances are essentially immoral in their tendency,' and it was resolved 'that the Department of Indian Affairs be requested to take more urgent steps to enforce their prohibition.'

Mr. Leupp promptly wrote to each member attending the meeting and posed two questions: (1) In what way had the measures then in force failed in their objective of suppressing Indian dances? (2) What alternative or additional measures should be adopted for the purpose?

Leupp reported: 'Every voter for the memorial assured me (1) That he did not know what methods I was already pursuing and (2) That he knew so little personally about the subject that he was unable to offer any advice.' He concludes, and the gleam is certainly in his eye as he writes: 'I refer to the incident, not for the purpose of being critical in turn, but to show how easily a body of men of pure character, high ideals and educated intelligence may be led into saying and doing the conventional thing in connection with Indian affairs, without a fraction of the mature consideration which they would feel obliged to give almost any other of the government's manifold activities before passing judgement on its conduct.'

To be knowledgeable about Indian affairs is not a mark of distinction in most social groups. Knowing the top ten batting averages in the two major baseball leagues might be a more valuable conversational asset. 42

Originally published in 1959, Indians and Other Americans: Two Ways of Life Meet was a combined effort of D'Arcy McNickle and social journalist, Harold Fey. Historical perspective provided the framework through which the reader could see present problems and policies. The authors wanted to provide their readers with more than an
increased historical understanding of Indian/white relations. They wanted to show Indian perspective; to explain Indian values by explaining change in the context of continuing cultural identity. They explained the difference of definition for the white man, and for the Indian, of cultural concepts such as education, law, land use, sovereignty, and progress. They encouraged the reader to respect the Indians for the adaptations thus far made, to a culture not their own, and they made suggestions of what was needed in the future. "The problem then is to devise conditions and to bring to bear the stimuli which will induce Indian people to adapt their customs, attitudes, and technical skills to the necessities of life in the American community."

In 1962, D'Arcy McNickle's book, *The Indian Tribes of the United States: Ethnic and Cultural Survival*, was published by Oxford University Press as part of the London Institute of Race Relations series. In it, McNickle reviewed much of the federal Indian policy that had been included in his two earlier works. This time, however, the story was written by an author, who, in part, due to his experience of Pan-Indian activities, possessed more insight into the way that Indian resistance to white cultural assumptions was an understandable expression of Indian personality and culture. Biographer, James Rupert quotes a letter McNickle wrote to a Mr. Scott in 1972, in an effort to explain, not excuse; the actions of Indian demonstrators to a group of people upset about the disruption. "Your experience...is by no means an isolated instance of militancy exhibited by protesting young Indians and it should be understood, not as rowdyism, but as a kind of delayed reaction to generations of cultural supression. Underneath it is an earnest though not always well directed search for identity and a proper place in contemporary
society."^44

When the book was expanded, revised and reissued in 1973, under the title, *Native American Tribalism: Indian Survivals and Renewals*, D'Arcy included more information, and new chapter summaries, as was his practice with revisions. He continued in his efforts to destroy stereotypes; by including many photographs of contemporary Indians in both traditional and modern situations. Portrayed as being neither the ignorant savages of the past, nor the vanishing Americans, who had come to the end of their trail, D'Arcy McNickle's book, *Native American Tribalism: Indian Survivals and Renewals*, was one of the first publications in which American Indians appeared in more positive, and more realistic light.

D'Arcy McNickle realized that any historian who did not accurately portray a people was not writing honest history. He recognized the importance of education as preparation of a people to write their own stories. And he wanted to be only one of the first American Indian historians.

McNickle especially respected other historians whose writing realistically portrayed American Indians. He had long admired Oliver LaFarge, prominent author, and Indian advocate. When Indiana Press asked him to write a biography of the man, D'Arcy looked forward to the opportunity.

LaFarge had written an very favorable review of D'Arcy's first novel, *The Surrounded*, for *The Saturday Evening Post*. The two men occasionally worked together on Indian projects and in Indian rights organizations. Theirs was not a close personal relationship. D'Arcy wrote to a friend that despite his long association with LaFarge, no
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camraderie developed. However, the biography McNickle wrote about LaFarge, *Indian Man: A Biography of Oliver LaFarge*, published in 1971, was a sensitive and appreciative look at the man.

Oliver LaFarge was not Indian. Born in 1901, from an upper class background, a trip he made to the Southwest as a young man changed his life. He had the opportunity to observe American Indians and found their culture to be so rich, yet so alien to his own. He began to dedicate himself to the study of anthropology, especially Indian cultures, and to write. Two of his books for younger readers were *A Pictorial History of the American Indian*, published in 1956, by Crown Publishers, Inc., and *The American Indian*, published in 1974, by Western Publishing Company, Inc. Oliver LaFarge shared D'Arcy McNickle's belief in the worth of American Indian culture, his admiration of its strength and continuation in the face of continued and increasing pressure to assimilate.

LaFarge's Indian work covered the period from just before John Collier's term with the BIA to the late 1950's. D'Arcy was interested in learning more about LaFarge's efforts on behalf of Indian self-determination which coincided with national policy change. The LaFarge biography gave him the opportunity to write history from a more subjective viewpoint.

Reviews of *Indian Man: A Biography of Oliver LaFarge* were mixed. Typical of comments made was that by one reviewer who commended D'Arcy on writing a biography which portrayed his subject with dignity and respect. The book was not a commercial success, perhaps due to the obscure subject. D'Arcy had remained fair in his representation of LaFarge. In a letter he wrote to a friend at this time, he expresses the
difficulty he had in writing the biography. "...I find myself admiring a man whom in the flesh I found difficult to take. His was a thorny exterior." Oliver LaFarge was an interesting combination of dedicated Indian scholar and activist, and intellectual, who viewed American Indians as part of the West, as representatives of a romantic past. According to D'Arcy, he remained too much removed: "I still don't like his attitude toward Indians, in spite of what he accomplished on their behalf and the undoubted sacrifices his Indian work required of him. He seems never to have acquired humility, which is always a great lack in a human being. But he was fearless, faithful and a hell of a hard worker." 

In what he wrote for publication, McNickle was cognizant of the good and the bad, the red and the white. This is what made him honest and accurate historian, and biographer. He remained firm in his belief in the ability of an individual to change, and to improve. Indeed, he recognized this as a responsibility not only of other individuals, but of himself. The history he wrote was never finished and set aside. For D'Arcy McNickle, historian, history was an ongoing process, which required him to keep learning and sharing what he learned with others. He was as careful and thorough in the updating and revision of what he had written as he had been in what he had originally written.

They Came Here First: the Epic of the American Indian, was republished in 1975. Indians and Other Americans: Two Ways of Life Meet, was republished in 1970, and The Indian Tribes of the United States: Ethnic and Cultural Survival, was republished in 1973. All were revised to include report of efforts made, accomplishments, current conditions, with updated, and additional suggestions for improvement by the author. As
biographer, James Ruppert wrote: "McNickle's argument was for change but for change that retained and expanded cultural identity, that remained based on self-determined needs. According to D'Arcy McNickle, 'To change, yet to remain steadfast-- that would seem to be the need of all living things.'"47 He expected no less of himself.

Chorus of Those Educated

He has been productive as both creative writer and historian, but his essence is educator in the broadest, deepest, and truest sense of the word. His outstanding ability to combine scholarship, reflections, originality and action have been selflessly dedicated in life-long service to human beings caught in the obstacles and tragedies imposed by a rapidly changing world. This has taken practical form in his work for the American Indian. He is a modest man who lets what he does speak for him.

Alexander H. Leighton to Omar Stewart, University of Colorado, 27 January 196648

...coming to the end of his journey, what was he to bring back with him? Would it be an object that he could carry in his hands? Would it be something he could observe, and carry back as a picture in his mind? Or something to hear, such as a ritual, a nine days' recitation of songs?...He had come on a long and difficult journey, and the thought that he might return home empty-handed filled him with anguish for his people.

D'Arcy McNickle, Runner in the Sun49

D'Arcy McNickle's journal entries had become hurried notes to himself about meetings to attend, articles to write, books to read. He kept careful record of expenditures, opening every year with an entry listing his debts owed. More often, included in his papers, could be found letters from friends and colleagues, poems and stories written by students. Among his papers was this poem by student, Greg Cohoe.
Words of Wisdom

It is time, my son, for you to become a man.
Go your way with our spirit in your hands.

Let courage be your strength
And wisdom your guide.

Go into coppered desert,
Seek your dreams.

Let them sing the songs of coming generations,
To the pace of drumbeats from the past.

Follow your precious flock,
your source of wealth.

Let mankind pursue evil spirits.
You must walk your own path,
Call on your Gods to sing over you,
And bravery will stain the footprints
Along your trail.

Be proud of your ancestors
Be proud you are a Navajo.

Go, my sons
After your clans.50

What made him an exceptional educator, was that by the time that he had
the opportunity to formally educate others, D'Arcy McNickle was knowledgeable about,
and proud of his own heritage as an American Indian. He realized how important it was
for a leader, first to be knowledgeable; to know enough history so that he could be proud
of the part his ancestors had played in making it. He also realized that with this
knowledge, came responsibility. As teacher and author, D'Arcy McNickle made history,
the stories and adventure of the past, so interesting that his students became interested in
becoming active participants who recognized individual possibilities and looked forward to making their own contribution to the building of the future of their people.

It was for his reputation as a respected author of history that D'Arcy McNickle was noticed by those in the academic world. In 1954, he was appointed guest lecturer at Regis College in Denver, Colorado. He continued to write. Yet, at on January 1, 1963, he would confide in his journal: "The new year closed has been a year of disappointment and of delays, postponements and negative decisions. There were some satisfactions, ... some gains. But the sad truth is that after two years, I have no regular income no full time occupation."51

In 1966, the University of Colorado awarded him an honorary doctorate. He was becoming a noted authority on Native cultures and history. At this time, he may have been well-read, and well-travelled, with many good personal friends, the respect of his colleagues who were well-known and influential people in government and in the academic world, but D'Arcy McNickle believed himself to be still in the process of becoming the man he wanted to become.

When he had sold his hard-won land allotment in favor of an education, D'Arcy probably did not realize that he would be educated to remember. In 1885, Isador Parenteau, his maternal grandfather, had fled Saskatchewan Territory, an exile in search of a place. In 1964, less than two-hundred years later, D'Arcy McNickle was invited to the University of Saskatchewan, to head the newly established Anthropology Department. He was prepared to give back.

If there were class notes made, he left no record of them. There is record that he
received tenure at the University of Saskatchewan, at Regina, on July 1, 1966, at a salary of $14,600. His title was that of Associate Professor in the Anthropology Department, Division of Social Sciences, on the faculty of Arts & Sciences. By the academic year 1970-71, he had made full professor at a salary of $19,350. His responsibilities were listed as supervision of two students, M.A. candidates in the department, and teaching two classes each semester. In the spring, he taught Anthropology and a new course, American Southwest, and in the fall, he taught Anthropology and Culture & Community Action.

On the Annual Faculty Information Form that he was required to fill out that year, he described his research activities to be a revision and update of his own work, Indians and Other Americans, and a review of work by another author. He was an active member of three professional anthropological societies. The list of papers presented at scholarly or professional conferences was long. He still made time for professionally related activities: Consultant to Citizenship Branch, Department of Secretary of State, on Indian Programs, Consultant for the Fellowship Program for John Hay Whitney Foundation, for unpaid public service activities; Principal Investigator for Native American Alcohol Council in Research & Action, a program funded by the Donner Foundation. He was Acting Chairman for the Department of Anthropology, responsible for organization of the teaching program and staff recruitment and supervision.

He retired in 1971. In a letter he wrote to a friend, he was relieved to be out of academia. "Academic life turned out to be a greater bureaucratic trap than the BIA and I was glad to be out of it." Years later, Richard Pope, a colleague of D'Arcy's at the
University recalled the situation. "D'Arcy worked to create an Indian presence at this
University through the Department of Anthropology, but political factors both within and
without the University prevented these aspirations from coming to fruition as a visible
result of his efforts." In the same letter, he wrote, "Is it historical irony or a Divine Hand
that has brought the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, so much the model of what
D'Arcy had been striving for, into existence on this campus?" 53

McNickle may have felt constrained in the classroom, and in the administrative
offices. As an anthropologist, he had worked in the field, and working for the BIA, he had
travelled from one place to another. He still hated meetings although he recognized them
as means to an end. At this time in his life, he was beginning to see accomplishments as an
end result of all of his required activity. It is understandable that he would have been most
proud of the leadership workshops which he organized, and of which he was director.
The workshops allowed Indian students the opportunity for open communication and
connection.

D'Arcy must have been particularly pleased that the workshops were funded by
AID, American Indian Development, Inc., which had been chartered in Colorado as a non-
profit, educational and charitable organization. Financial support was contributed by a
wide variety of educational and philanthropic institutions, including private foundations,
religious and secular organizations, tribal councils, individuals, and the BIA (a distant
result of the Collier reforms).

McNickle had been executive director of AID since 1952. Founded in 1955, the
workshop was funded by American Indian Development, Inc. in cooperation with the
extension division of the University of Colorado. The Workshop on American Indian
Affairs was a six-week summer session for American Indian College students conducted
on the campus of the University of Colorado at Boulder. An off campus fraternity house
which housed forty students was leased every summer. The schedule included lectures in
the morning, and monitored discussion groups in the afternoon. There was a schedule of
assigned readings, frequent guest speakers, special projects, and social outings. The
University granted six hours of undergraduate credit or two hours of graduate credit for
students who successfully completed the requirements of the course. Credits were
transferable.

Neither scholarly nor social activity was the primary purpose of the Workshop.
The students who attended the workshop represented a wide distribution of tribes,
colleges, states, and age range. Attendance by representatives from twenty-four different
tribes was not unusual. Student's ages ranged from eighteen to thirty-eight, the average
age of those attending the workshop was 21.8. In the Annual Report for 1964, the
challenges of the program were described.

A major problem for the Workshop in any year is that many of the students come to
it academically and emotionally unprepared for the experience. They come from
impoverished communities and schools, from situations of really bad racial and
social relations, from situations of community despair and disintegration; and they
bring with them the adaptations to these environments which have proved
successful, or which at least have proved for them a means of living with the
situation. Their past experience with educational institutions may not have led
them to believe that intellectual inquiry is possible, but rather than the whole
relationship is one of mutual manipulation between student and teacher, each
pretending a concern for the other which is not really serious... For many students
the Workshop is a kind of circuit-breaker; it interrupts a self-reinforcing circle of
experience generated by the student's interaction with his environment.... What really
stands out is that the Workshop does have an impact on many of the students and
they seem to go on to make more sense of their lives than they had been able to achieve previous to their attendance at the Workshop....The theme of community self-determination must continue as the focus of the program, with social science concepts utilized to deepen a student's understanding of the meaning for him of life as a part of an Indian community.  

American Indian students had once been captives; removed from their people to be educated; to become assimilated and enculturated, and returned to their tribes as new representatives of a culture not their own. With the workshops, the purpose of education had changed. While in the past, they had been educated to forget their history and heritage; at the workshop, they were educated to remember, to take pride, and realize the responsibility in being Indian. The first week of the program, the students would discuss the basic problems encountered by everyone living on Indian reservations. Often, they were surprised at how much they shared, the similarity of their problems. During the second week, the focus would shift to identification of options available for dealing with some of those problems.

Students were encouraged to ask, 'How can we do it?' D'Arcy considered this to be a crucial first step. Decades of BIA paternalism had caused a virtual paralysis of Indians' ability to make significant decisions about their own lives. The BIA had renewed its efforts to assimilate the Indians and terminate government services. No longer was an effort being made to provide them with real decision-making opportunities. D'Arcy realized how important it was that Indians begin to realize that they were responsible for their own destiny; that they must not only remember and honor the past, but develop the power within themselves to build a future. Those educated at the workshops returned to their tribes as leaders, knowledgeable about their culture, more comfortable in their own
skin, empowered to pass learning on.

Excerpts from The Indian Progress, the official newsletter of the Workshop on American Indian Affairs best show how much of a difference was made on those who attended. Authored and edited entirely by the students, themselves, it was no wonder that much was learned. One student enthusiastically claimed that he had learned more about Indians in six weeks, than he had in all of his years at school. If D'Arcy McNickle had suffered boarding school silently, he would ensure that his students need not do the same. Those who did not realize that they had one, began to find their own voice.

An article entitled, Students Discuss Teachers described the challenges faced by the students, themselves.

A seminar of upper division students dealt with 'My teacher's attitudes toward the Indian student'. The students felt there was a variety of situations experienced ranging from a feeling that there was no adjustment necessary in school to that of feeling like a curiosity at school. Many times difficulties lie in the administration the predominantly white school boards are not sympathetic with the Indian students and the Indian's townspeople in many cases are not represented. Individual teachers are unsatisfactory due to their lack of understanding. The Indians have a set of values they are not in agreement with and while they may be sympathetic, they may not understand the problems of adjustment and do more harm than good.

The students of some tribes live in a bi-lingual environment or often where only their native tongue is spoken. This situation often becomes a problem for the teacher and for the adjustment of the student. In some high schools, Indian students come into contact with a social hierarchy in which the Indian filters down to the bottom and often times out. The filtering process can be given impetus by disapproval of teachers and classmates, misunderstanding and adjustment.

And in every issue, the Roving Reporter invited students to share their individual experience and thoughts about the workshop, evidence of what the students had opportunity to learn because of the efforts of director, D'Arcy McNickle.
To evaluate the Workshop I compare the end results according to my formal opinion I had when I arrived. These opinions were mainly that the Indian was just plain stubborn, hard to please and ought to 'shape-up'. The solution to the problems looked so simple I couldn't understand why there were any problems.

Now that the workshop has ended I find myself with a new perspective and understanding. The influence of culture and heritage was brought out as the great underlying causes of failure of programs, both Bureau of Indian Affairs and tribes. Explanations of views held by various peoples show the conflict among those who are trying to solve another people's conflict.

I think the lecture given by the staff kept with the basic plan of the course and was informative. The only thing one could say, that is different from most courses is the enthusiasm shown by the interested staff. One of the best points of the Workshops was the program of having various people speak to us on their various points of view. I am very much satisfied with the fact I learned something that is applicable in my life.66

People have the mistaken idea that we are here to learn to be leaders on a reservation, but I myself am learning more about my Indian background, such as that the U.S. Constitution was taken in part from the Iroquois Nation.67

I am learning to value my Indian heritage much more than I ever had before and also to understand some of the developments in history which placed the American Indian in the position he is in today. Only by understanding this can one ever help him.68

American Indian history is not adequately taught in our public schools. In this Workshop I have become much more familiar with Indian history. The need for a more rounded out knowledge of American Indian history is absolutely essential. My interest has only begun toward understanding American cultures.

It is the historians duty to record for future generations the history we see and feel today. By this very act we would be giving them a broader perspective. They would not only understand Indians of today but also other cultures throughout the rest of the world.69

McNickle believed it important for students to have the opportunity not only to listen to those more experienced, and perhaps, wiser than themselves. What was especially important to D'Arcy as an educator, as a leader of leaders, is that he expected
every individual to learn for himself, and respected his ability to do so. In a letter of
recommendation he wrote for one of his students, D'Arcy indicates what he valued in a
scholar. 
"...I can say that I have been well pleased with his performance as a student. He
has been prompt and careful in the work he turns in, and he reads more widely than his
assignments require. Other instructors who know his work have reported similarly on his
performance....I would expect him to be conscientious and resourceful."60 One who did
thoughtful work, and thorough research, who was well-read, and respected by colleagues
could also have described D'Arcy McNickle.

McNickle advised those he taught: "...Not to have any preconceived ideas-- let
the people work it out themselves. Let the people make the decisions all alone....Lack of
formal education shouldn't fool you-- these people can make decisions." Those he taught
would return to their tribes as leaders of future programs. Their challenge would be as
D'Arcy, himself, had encountered, in "...devising ways in which people can learn."61 For a
leader, especially, D'Arcy must have realized the importance of self-honesty and humility.

Evidence of this belief may be found in notes he wrote for an unpublished short
story, "...To be a judge, you got to be about perfect. You got to know everything, and
you got to live up to it. Otherwise, you got nothing to say to anybody who does wrong.
Anybody who puts himself up to be that good, he's just a liar. And people will laugh at
him...."62 It was respect for others that made D'Arcy McNickle an exceptional educator.

In all aspects, I have gained immeasurably from the Workshop. It has clarified many
things as well as made me aware of a great many others. From it I have learned to
see others outside my own little world and to understand and appreciate them and
their culture. Along with this is the newly acquired, but insurmountable pride that I
now feel towards the Indians as people and the knowledge that I'm a part of that
people. The Workshop has also helped me to categorize my thoughts and analyze them and my values.\(^{63}\)

Before coming to the Workshop I never was as aware of others around me as I am now. I have become more proud of myself as an Indian and appreciate my cultural background even more. Not only has the Workshop helped me to think analytically, it has also increased any ability to understand people (in general) for what they are and not for their nationality or race. It would be impossible for me to write in words what I have gained from attending this year's Workshop because I have attained much more than I had expected.\(^{64}\)

Coming to the Workshop has given me insight to many things. Not only have I met 34 other Indians from various places and other tribes, but also encountered opportunities that I would have otherwise been unable to experience....\(^{65}\)

The Workshop has offered me an opportunity to see myself as an individual, as a member of a tribal group, and as a human being. In knowing more of myself and of my tribal group, I will be better equipped to work for my fellow men.\(^{66}\)

If he had learned only about his own past, and about himself, D'Arcy McNickle's influence would have been that left by an individual, as an American Indian author. But, he did more than write about the past. Throughout his life, D'Arcy worked to find a place and to build a future for all Native Americans. It is because he saw himself as not being the center, but as part of the whole in relationship to all Indian people; and to all people, that the difference he has made has been profound. He empowered individuals to realize their potential, and to recognize the value of working with others, to realize the wisdom in respecting others, and the importance of understanding them.

I've learned that Indian students, other than my own tribe have different ideas about Indian culture. Before I came up here, I thought there was only one Indian way, but there isn't. Each one of us has been brought up to believe in his own tribal customs and traditions.

This Workshop has given me a keen insight not only in myself but also within the Indian Reservation on which I live. The lectures given by our Professors have helped me to see clearly the problems I am confronted with and how I may meet the
problems....As the saying goes 'Experience is knowledge' and I believe that our unity here at the Workshop is a great experience. We not only obtain knowledge from the educational program of the Workshop but we also obtain a great deal of experienced knowledge from our friends here attending the Workshop.\textsuperscript{7}

This Workshop is a great help in understanding the American Indian. Why they are, what they are and act the way they do. I wish every high school and college Indian student could attend the Workshop. I am sure it could help them a lot through school and later on in life. Theory without practice is empty, and practice without theory is blind....\textsuperscript{68}

From the Workshop, I have gained new friends and experiences which only this particular situation could offer....I have not only learned Indian songs, but I will also receive, credits. To sum this up, I've had a lot of fun and have acquired a better understanding of the Indian. Now I feel that it's great to be an Indian!\textsuperscript{69}

It is hard to sum up in a few words the impression and feelings I have regarding my participation in the...Workshop on Indian Affairs. I will value most the friends I have made during the six weeks, and will use the knowledge gained in the classes to better understand, and in understanding accept the many different individuals that make up the Indian people. I am more aware now of things I have only experienced and will appreciate more and more the old saying, "To know what you know and what you don't know is to know!"\textsuperscript{70}

In a letter to a colleague, D'Arcy McNickle would explain his purpose for the workshops. the process by which he hoped to achieve his purpose, and why it was important to do so.

A minority has to be related in some way, usually negatively, to the majority. The majority has crowded me out or withheld something from me, and I want to get in there and have my say and get my share. But that's not the Indian position. From where they sit, Anglos, Jews, Negroes, the poor are not clearly distinguishable. They belong to a different system. Whatever the relationships may be between those several components, the Indian doesn't see how he's involved. He feels oppressed, but not because he has been denied a place in that other system. His feeling derives from the untenable position he is in of being offered something (industrial-urban society) he doesn't want, and being told that what he does want (to be Indian, or more strictly to be part of an Indian community) is a dead end. And this leads to the problem of identity, in which again the dimensions are different. Except for those who have wandered off and got lost in city ways, Indians who remain in the community know who they are. But they are told they can't be that.
This is different from the position of the Negro, who has been told for a long time that he had better damn well stay Negro. And I've never heard of Jews being told that they better start being Gentiles.

And this brings me to the Workshop. The isolation is purposeful-- actually it is not as complete as it might seem, since the students participate freely in campus activities. We try to clear the decks of all the furniture with which they have lived, all pressures to shape up and be good Indians, and let them try to decide, in the light of such data as they can handle, where they want to be with reference to a tribal-urban continuum. Some of the students have great sighs of relief, having made such a decision, but some, I suspect, leave us still perplexed. Months later they write, and holy smokes they've organized a campus Indian club or they're back home getting into politics. Well, who's perfect? 

With his innate humility and a sense of humor, D'Arcy McNickle did not allow himself or his students to remain content with answers already found, and history as written by others. His recognition, acknowledgement and respect for every individual made him expect that each would make his own path. As teacher, and leader, D'Arcy McNickle believed it to be his responsibility to devise ways in which people could learn.

As historian, teacher, and author, his influence cannot be measured.

I am learning...to develop better leadership qualities to be a better spokeswoman for my tribe in the future. 

I believe that I am gaining information which will prove valuable in my teaching career, I eventually intend to teach on an Indian reservation. I believe that I will have a fuller understanding of the Indian students.

I shall write. For a long time I have been plagued as to the point of view I should take in my fiction. I had much to say, but whose point of view should I have taken? That of the Indian or that of a person with whom the outside world could identify? The Workshop has solved my dilemma and has firmly convinced me that I should write from the Indian's point of view.

I think the...study has been invaluable contribution to my education objectives best even more so in helping me to appreciate and be proud of my Indian heritage. I have become aware that young people should work to preserve the Indian way of life for it too has invaluable contributions to make for its own welfare and the
welfare of others. The voices would no longer be anonymous echo. A chorus of those educated joined in singing the song of the future for a people. The chorus of voices continues.

The Newberry Library

...for the single purpose of recommending the creation of a memorial to McNickle in recognition of the veneration usually accorded him and the invaluable services he has given to this Center.

The Newberry Library Board of Directors, Meeting Minutes, 15 October, 1977

The Workshops in American Indian Affairs continued until 1968. Additional opportunities for American Indians would follow. American Indians were finding their own voice, and building a future for themselves. In a letter he wrote to a colleague in 1975, D'Arcy described the workshops as being a success:

That workshop experience, seen now in retrospect, was an awakening for most of the 300-odd students who took part in it. Of the young Indian leaders who have come to national attention in recent years and who contributed markedly to the development of their own communities, many came through the workshop. The thing that made the difference in their lives, I am confident, was their exposure to the social sciences, which provided insights into their own and the general society, as well as the conceptual tools for analyzing the forces around them. They became articulate and, in some cases, quite angry about the exploitation to which they and their kin had been subjected. But the anger, when it was present, was informed and usually effective.

At a speech he gave at the Northwest Indian Conference in the summer of 1977, D'Arcy talked about the progress that had been made by the American Indian people during his lifetime. He did not take personal credit, but he did take pride in the accomplishments made, and apparently looked forward to a future.
Now this, I think, is what has been changing. I think Indians are now on the road back to assuming some part, if not all, of that autonomy, sovereignty, self-government, that they had at the beginning. They may not be able to make it all the way back because it has become so complex. So many laws now stand in the way, and the chance of getting all those laws modified becomes a practically insuperable problem. But I think Indians are moving in that direction.

After 350 years in contact with the White world, a great deal was lost, of course... But in spite of these losses... I have the impression that the simple core of Indian life persists. The family and kinship lines still function. Values and belief systems still function. There's still respect for the individual; there's still quality of sharing... they recognize themselves-- they're in this world together. This, I think, is alive today-- actually perhaps more so, because I think that 50 years ago the identity was with the tribe more than with the 'Indianess' as such.

... tribes were always on their own, fighting their own battles. Now, for the first time, in these last 40 years or so, tribes are forming tribal organizations, state organizations, regional organizations, national organizations. And these organizations became developed. When the National Congress of American Indians was formed in 1944, no one had any expectations that the group would last.

They also began publishing mimeographed newsletters... They were publishing these things, describing what was going on at home and commenting on what was going on nationally. So there was this coming together.

The protest movements of the 1960's encouraged Indian protests, although the Indians didn't necessarily involve themselves in those national protest movements. But it did give Indians ideas that things could be done if they would get together and start action.

... Indians, in addition to that, began taking school seriously, began going to college and professional schools.... The movement for ethnic studies all across the country was, ... part of this general protest.

And the final step in this now is that Indians are taking over the management of their own local community schools.... a school must involve the people of the community, not just professional personnel recruited from the outside. A school must contribute to the development of the community-- adults as well as children. The school must be part of the process by which a way of life of a people is transmitted to its young. A school that is concerned only with importing the culture of an alien society is depriving that community of its natural, normal increase of leaders.

And finally, where English is not the native language, it should be taught as a second
language, to be mastered after the child obtains the competency in his native tongue. Some tribes are developing dictionaries, and if they haven't had written form of their language, they are developing the written form. Things are being written now in native languages—stories, poems. Eventually there's going to be a native literature. Indians will be teaching their children out of their own language. They'll have texts to go with them—

I think I've said enough. 

In his journal, he had written, "Men hate because they lack the heart to take rebuffs and not speak out on equal terms." D'Arcy McNickle had worked all of his life to enable the American Indian people to realize their voice. He had learned to suffer the bureaucracy of the BIA for a larger purpose, and had used what he learned in his efforts toward building community for American Indian people. He was looking forward to being able to have more time to write.

In his journal, he wrote: "Tomorrow the moving company will come in...I hope to get away from Regina...and head for New Mexico, where Viola and a new life will be waiting. I have been trying to get away for the last two weeks but one detail after another has kept me tied to the office." In 1967, D'Arcy had asked Roma for a divorce, recording in his diary that he should have taken such a step ten years before. In 1969, he married Vi Pfommer, whom he had met through his work with the BIA. He would remain married to her until her death in 1977.

D'Arcy McNickle retired from the University of Saskatchewan in 1971. He moved to Albuquerque, New Mexico. When he retired, D'Arcy continued to write, to consult, and to participate in professional conferences. During this period, his book, Indian Man: a Biography of Oliver Lafarge, was published in 1971, and his non-fiction
work, *Native American Tribalism: Indian Survivals and Renewals*, was published in 1973. In 1965, in the process of doing research for the biography he wrote, it became necessary for D'Arcy to make a trip to New York City. If a letter he wrote to Vi Pfrommer, it is apparent that his thoughts had not changed about the materialism of the majority. "The morning commute scene, with all the able-bodied male population rushing puppet-like to the demands of the city, is frightening for its unnaturalness. The worlds of house and bread-winning are so far removed. I manage to take a later train which puts me in with the fat ladies in their mink stoles going to the city to shop for more mink stoles." The pace of his life had slowed and he seemed glad of it.

In his journal, more reference was made to his garden, regarding layout, planning, expenses; recording his concern about what to plant and where, success and failure of what he did plant, report of weather conditions, and comments about the beauty of nature-- which he had always made time to enjoy. If journal entries show him to have been necessarily introspective as a young man, and increasingly absorbed in activities and accomplishments in middle age, later entries indicate a man who continued to look to the future, continued to read, to travel, to write, but who also had begun to realize and appreciate some time at home, and with family. Among his notes from this time can be found a note from his grandson, which included a crayoned drawing of a helicopter and the query, "Hello grandpa. What have you been doing?"

D'Arcy remained seriously concerned about American Indians' position in contemporary society. Revisions of his own earlier published articles and books absorbed much of his time. And while he, like other Indian leaders, recognized that progress had
been made, he also realized the danger in settling for the status quo. In a letter he wrote
to a colleague, with reference to his rewriting of the Preface to the revised edition of They
Came Here First: the Epic of the American Indian, which would be republished by Harper
& Row, in 1975, D'Arcy voiced his concern with accurate portrayal of current conditions.
"It seemed appropriate, after reading through the material once more, to inform the reader
that a great deal has happened in twenty-five years, and much remains the same." And in
another letter, he wrote: "Conditions have so changed, our information has so expanded,
in these last twenty-five years as to outmode completely all but the middle section of the
text, and even that section will require some updating." He added, "After all, I am
supposed to be retired, and we have just built a comfortable home here in Albuquerque
with an adequate study, for once...." This was not a protest against his making the
necessary revisions. On the contrary, it was his offered assurance that he not only had the
time, but now, also had the place where he could continue to write.

D'Arcy McNickle's contribution to true Native American Indian literature was
more remarkable than he, himself, would ever realize, but others noticed. In 1971,
Lawrence W. Towner, Librarian and Director of The Newberry Library in Chicago, was
concerned with how to make the newly acquired Edward Ayer and Everett D. Graff
Collection of Western Americana better known and more accessible to scholars. He
wanted to create an interdisciplinary research center devoted to the study of American
Indian history. He sought the advice of D'Arcy McNickle and other eminent Indian
scholars.

Like John Collier, Towner was wise to invite contribution from Indians. During
the course of D'Arcy's life, government institutions, research centers, and museums had come a long way since the much publicized capture and isolation of the last wild man, 'Ishi, the man primeval' who was an object to be studied. American Indians had become active participants in the telling of their own history, and the building of their own future. No longer silent representatives of a forgotten people, their voices were being heard, and their presence not only acknowledged, but becoming recognized and respected.

McNickle agreed to help Towner. They applied for, and received grant funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities, NEH. Towner needed a spokesman, someone who could encourage the white establishment to provide matching funds, and at the same time, establish a credibility for the center with both the scholarly and the Indian communities. D'Arcy McNickle, both Indian and scholar could do this. When Towner invited him to become the first program director. D'Arcy agreed to be temporary director, on condition that he could do most of his preliminary work from his home in Albuquerque, until a full-time, on-site director would be hired. His association with the library led to republication of his three novels, which had long been out of print. A new generation of readers would have the opportunity to read what he had written.

At the newly established Center for the History of the American Indian at The Newberry Library, work had begun to re-orient history, to include a more comprehensive picture of the past. At the Center, a multi-disciplinary approach using history, literature and anthropology would be used to discover and describe the Indians' view of their own past. Historical re-orientation would be based upon the fact that the Indians do have a history of their own, quite apart from their interactions with non-
Indians. A scholarship program was established for American Indians at the pre- and post-doctoral levels in various social sciences. When it was discovered that there were few American Indians who could meet the educational requirements, the program was opened to those with bachelor's degrees. Teachers were trained in Indian history methodology. The Center joined the Big Ten Universities, and the University of Chicago in an academic consortium which enabled graduate students from these institutions, many of whom would become educational leaders, to have access to the collections and resources. D'Arcy McNickle's was primary contribution to the building of an academic community.

As an administrator, McNickle's leadership style was characterized by colleagues, past and present, as being one of moderation. Francis Jennings, who became the first full-time director of the Center in 1976, had opportunity to work with D'Arcy. In the course of work; even during times of differences of opinion and ego threats, he described D'Arcy McNickle as being "unflappable". "He seemed to think that his job was to promote unity rather than be a partisan...Fussing with his pipe, he would slow the pace of the discussion until tempers cooled and ideas began to coalesce."83 Father Paul Prucha, who served several terms on the Center Advisory Council while D'Arcy was there, observed the same, describing him to be "as sort of moderating force between the whites and the Indians on the board and between the historians and the anthropologists".84

Others acknowledged similar administrative habits. Rolland Wright, who had taught at the workshops with D'Arcy described him. "He was never intrusive with faculty or staff, but rather was always helpful and interested in everything that was going
on... Despite his interest and concern, however, he was absolutely non-directive with the faculty and staff, always expecting them to find their own way." Richard Pope, from the Regina campus, at the University of Saskatchewan, recalled, "To those of us who knew Indians, he ran the Department in a very Indian way." Struggling for consensus was more Indian than white leadership technique. Lawrence Towner maintained that D'Arcy seemed more Indian every time he came to Chicago, and his passion for consensus was a large part of that definition.

If some people perceived this search for a common ground among adversaries as a weakness-- as Vine Deloria Jr. observed, "My impression of (D'Arcy McNickle) was that he would never take any controversial positions on anything." For those who were accustomed to working within an adversarial framework of majority rule, D'Arcy's manner could be very frustrating; however, those who knew him, and watched him in action, realized that his passion for consensus, was fueled by a passion for change. Early in his career, he had written in his journal:

> In the beginning, there was chaos. Everything was there but nothing existed. The human mind is such that it cannot grasp things that swiftly are, it must restrict them, qualify them, isolate them, give them names. The history of the human race is bringing things out of chaos into being. This faculty is one that grows with exercise....So we have created a world. But nothing has been added. There is nothing new. The ultimate world has not yet been created. That will begin to emerge when we give up entirely the habit of anthropomorphy; when we return to face chaos and anarchy and are not destroyed.  

D'Arcy McNickle's style was different, not better or worse, than that of other American Indian leaders. Different paths taken by different individuals still moved toward a much different, and a better future. The voices would combine to influence, to make a
difference.

After a full-time director was hired at the Center, Towner and the Advisory Council elected D'Arcy to serve as Chairman, a position with fewer responsibilities, that allowed him to remain involved. D'Arcy McNickle and Lawrence W. Towner were not only professional colleagues, but firm friends. This friendship was expressed in a letter Towner wrote to McNickle at this time: "Without your help, we would never have gotten funded by the White community, and without your help, we would never have been accepted by either the scholarly or the Indian community. You have been the CRUCIAL factor in our success, and I thank you on behalf of the Library, the financial sponsors, the scholarly community, and if I may be so bold, the Indian community." And looking forward to D'Arcy's next visit to Chicago, Towner added: "Rachel and the children look forward to having their most favorite Indian of all near by once again." 89

In 1977, D'Arcy McNickle was nominated for the position of Distinguished Research Fellow by The Newberry Library Board of Directors. This honorary position would include a generous stipend, gratuitous housing whenever he could come to Chicago, and freedom to work on his own projects at the Center. In September, Richard H. Brown wrote D'Arcy to inform him of this honor, "You are very much a part of 'the Newberry family' and it would give us great pleasure indeed to have you here." 90 D'Arcy looked forward to being able to accept this position. He agreed to give them his decision at the next advisory council meeting in October.

In October, 1977, when he failed to arrive at the Advisory Council meeting in Chicago, Towner and the other council members became concerned, and contacted the
Albuquerque police, and asked them to investigate. D'Arcy McNickle had died alone, of a massive coronary, at his home in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

In 1983, D'Arcy's daughter, Antoinette, donated her father's papers to The Newberry Library, and the Center was renamed the D'Arcy McNickle Center for the History of the American Indian in his honor. Most of the books from his personal library were donated to the Navajo Community College in Tsaile, Arizona. Dorothy R. Parker, herself a recipient of a fellowship at The Newberry Library in 1986, wrote a biography of D'Arcy McNickle, Singing an Indian Song. In it, she describes the Center: "...Its efforts to train scholars in a new approach to Indian history, to collect and make accessible previously unknown tribal materials, to train teachers, and to help tribal historians create a meaningful history for their own people, reflect his lifelong concerns. A new generation of Indian scholars, trained at the center, is making an important contribution to the Indians' understanding of their own past." Indians and non-Indians have been afforded the opportunity for study and research which provides them with new understanding of history and enables them to portray more comprehensive picture of it. The D'Arcy McNickle Center for the History of the American Indian continues to improve upon, and to expand its program.

The Native American Educational Services, NAES, is another institution that can be credited to the influence of D'Arcy McNickle. In Chicago, this university without walls, is best described by McNickle biographer, Parker:

...NAES has developed an accredited academic degree program that provides Indian students with training in two primary areas. The first is concerned with the overall generalized Indian experience. In this part of the curriculum, students tackle such
subjects as federal law and policy, academic and professional studies in the social sciences and literature, and the socioeconomic analysis of tribes as generic, common units. The other thrust of the program is site specific. It involves the in-depth study of individual tribal environments, including the religion, the wisdom embodied in the tribes' oral traditions, and federal-tribal relations as experienced by particular tribes....NAES students are exploring ways to follow both 'maps of the mind' They are developing a meaningful web of knowledge that will allow Indian people to take for themselves the best of both worlds as they anticipate a stronger and brighter future for Native American people everywhere.92

If the program sounds similar to the Leadership Training Workshops, it may be because it has been developed by those who had been workshop participants. One of the founders of NAES, Robert V. Dumont, Jr. recalls the impact the Workshop had upon his life. It "was probably the most important academic experience of my life, because it provided a framework for learning which was related to my environment. Certainly we have modelled NAES on this notion-- the functional role of tribal knowledge and learning for the student and the community."93 D'Arcy's concern that Indian people develop their own educational format and begin to tell their own stories has been answered, in part, by Native American Educational Services. His Indian histories are used in the curriculum. NAES students are beginning to research, and to write their own tribal histories at the McNickle Center.

The D'Arcy McNickle Library at Salish Kootenai College, on the Flathead Reservation in Pablo, Montana was dedicated in October, 1987, almost ten years to the day after his death. D'Arcy's friend, Alfonso Ortiz had spoken at the memorial service for him ten years before: "When McNickle sold his land and went off to Europe, he gave himself over to history, and from this time on he did not again have any sense that his Indianness was ultimately rooted in a place to return to in any way."94 Because of his
courage to leave, much had become possible for his people. The heroes of D'Arcy McNickle's novels, Archilde, Salt, and Antoine, all return to the place of their birth. During his lifetime, D'Arcy returned home only in his imagination. But because of the legacy he left, as educator, anthropologist, historian, D'Arcy McNickle had made a place for his people in the world beyond home. That he would be remembered in the place from where his own journey had begun was fitting testimony to the man, who had always kept home and his people close to his heart.

For D'Arcy McNickle, what would be more important than his being remembered as an individual who made a difference was the actual difference he made in the minds and hearts of many. Of the photographs left among his notes and journals, most are of others; of community houses in the process of being built, of Indian craftsmen, of Indian leaders, of Indian and non-Indian friends. D'Arcy remained behind the camera. He captured memories so others would not forget. In the few photographs which include him, he appears in profile; watching and questioning as he kneels beside an Indian craftsman, listening at the side of an Indian leader, whispering something in his daughter's ear as he sits behind her, supporting her in her first steps.

The two photographs most often seen on the cover pages of the reprints of his books are not posed pictures; he does not look directly into the camera. His profile is frozen in time, looking forward, as a young man, and an older man. What is most admirable about D'Arcy McNickle is that when he faced obstacles, he continued to move forward and to look forward.

D'Arcy McNickle may not be remembered as an individual, who made a
difference. But a difference has been made. When D'Arcy McNickle is forgotten, when
his books are no longer read, still, the song will continue. The memorial service held at his
home after his death might almost have been called a celebration. Family, friends and
associates gathered to share good food, good wine, and loving memories of D'Arcy
McNickle. Dorothy R. Parker wrote: "Jonah Yazzie, a Navajo friend from Crownpoint
days who had helped build the new house, observed that the showers falling gently that
day were evidence that D'Arcy McNickle had not really left his people. His presence
would continue among them as the blessing of rain." Nothing was over. It had just
begun.

The singing came in wave after wave of soft sound, wordless, yet filled with sorrow
and lamentation...The song came from above and below and from all sides. Then a
speaking voice mingled with the song, and it too came from all sides..."Now you
must sing the song you heard long ago. Don't stop. Keep singing. Otherwise I will
not be able to help you. When you stop singing, you will float away and be one of
us." The singing broke off, but only briefly, and then resumed more quietly, as one sings
who also listens.

American Indian Author

D'Arcy McNickle probably started contemporary Indian literature,..

James Welch, Winged Words, American Indian Writers Speak

I have no doubt that D'Arcy McNickle's example was very important to Native
American writers of the 60's and 70's. It was a crucial time for examples and D'Arcy
through his work stood in the right place at the right time.

N. Scott Momaday, D'Arcy McNickle
D'Arcy used words sparingly and with respect, like traditional Indian orators, and one had to become fully engaged to grasp the subtlety of his perception.

Alfonso Ortiz, *Word Ways: Novels of D'Arcy McNickle*¹⁰⁰

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of McNickle's book, is his success in capturing the whole in small compass, by the exercise of a thoroughly artistic selection, and writing of such sorts that the reader is primarily interested in an excellent story as such, and only secondarily in the background, which he gets in proper balance.

Oliver LaFarge, *Past Imperfect: Essays on History, Libraries, and the Humanities*¹⁰¹

...The bond with the land that his characters exhibit is at the center of their perceptions and so completely ingrained into their attitudes that McNickle sees it expressed not in mythic emotions of harmony and rebirth, but in culturally sanctioned behaviors and values. The portrayal of the Indians ...emphasizes the Western landscape as an expression of their culture, links their freedom with its openness, its destruction with their own. Their communion with the land is through hunts, moving camps, and ritual action, rather than moments of mystic unity.

James Ruppert, *D'Arcy McNickle*¹⁰²

In her novel, *When Nickels Were Indians: An Urban Mixed-Blood Story*,

Patricia Penn Hilden describes D'Arcy McNickle's characters as being very real and believable for Indian readers: "Looking someone down as most tribal people know, has deep historical roots. One of D'Arcy McNickle's characters is typical: 'She had a way, all unconscious, of making other people seem small and squirmy, like something you might pluck out of your hair.'"¹⁰³

An Indian can't tell what's on his mind until he tells a story. My story is like this: When I was a young man I started on a journey....

D'Arcy McNickle, *Wind From An Enemy Sky*¹⁰⁴

There has been much scholarly critique and analysis of D'Arcy McNickle's three novels. More attention has been paid to them than to any of his other writing. While some
additional commentary is required of this author in the context of this work, for this reason, it will be brief.

D'Arcy McNickle expressed emotion in his poetry, thoughts in his journal. His belief and experience may be reflected in his prose; his short stories, and especially, in his three novels. The novels he wrote had a profound impact on those who read them, especially those Indians who were struggling with identity and loyalty issues similar to his own. American Indian author, Patricia Penn Hilden, also of mixed blood, wrote:

...I could not resolve the dilemmas posed by the conflicts between urban politicals who were only slightly Indian and the young reservation people I dealt with, daily confronted by the stark contrasts between their previous experience and life in the university. Moreover, I could not understand my role in this historic confrontation between tribal life and the demands (and of rewards) of university success. If we strove for academic success in the European-American curriculum, were we not, I wondered constantly, continuing the process of assimilation begun by boarding schools? Were our goals the eventual destruction of traditional tribal life? Were we un-fitting Native American youth for life among tribal people? The problems encountered by one of D'Arcy McNickle's fictional protagonists, Archilde, when he visited his family after moving away from tribal life, suggested that this had been part of McNickle's own experience of university success. In The Surrounded, Archilde muses, 'These efforts to bring peace and order into the lives of his relatives before he left them forever did not please him greatly. Whatever he did, he felt that he remained on the outside of their problems. He had grown away from them, and even when he succeeded in approaching them in sympathy, he remained an outsider—only a little better than a professor come to study their curious ways of life. He saw no way of changing it.'

But, on the other hand, what arrogance, what elitism, prompted such questions from those of us who were products of our forbears' decision to abandon that same tribal life? How could we make decisions for other people? Was it possible to offer the university as a choice rather than a goal?...And most perplexing of all, where did I fit in all this? How Indian was I?105

A blue-eyed member of the Nez Perce Tribe, Hilden, who had grown up in 40's-50's Los Angeles, recalled that the only other Indian representation was the white man's
interpretation of the Indian, such as the silent Tonto, sidekick to the Lone Ranger, of early television fame. She remembered that D'Arcy McNickle's characters were real to her and made her feel not so alone.

D'Arcy McNickle probably did not realize the extent of his influence. Lawrence Towner, president and librarian at The Newberry Library, and a colleague, wrote: "McNickle's The Surrounded, his first book, reveals who and what he was and what he remained-- a man with the breadth of intellect to live in two worlds, with the compassion to love them both, and with the talent to write so effectively about where they tragically intermesh that he could share his experience with others." And American Indian author, James Ruppert writes: "Almost everything that McNickle wrote was directly concerned with the tragic interface between two cultures. But he wrote as an educator, to encourage understanding, both self-understanding and cross-cultural understanding." In 1936, D'Arcy McMcNickle was hired as Administrative Assistant to Commissioner John Collier at the Bureau of Indian Affairs. His first novel, The Surrounded, was published. It had been circulating among publishers since 1927, receiving favorable reaction but no firm offers. When it was finally published, it was well received, and by those D'Arcy respected. Anthropologist, Oliver LaFarge thought it an excellent story. "The writing is simple, clear, direct, devoid of affectations, and fast moving." He added that the book was on his "small list of creditable modern novels using the first Americans as theme." For the rest of his life, D'Arcy McNickle would be in the field working with Indians, or he would be writing about them. In the process, he was learning about himself. Although he would keep a journal until his death, after 1936,
entries primarily recorded minutes and notes from meetings, reminders of appointments
made, research notes, descriptive passages about the weather, and his garden. It was
probably not that he was any less introspective, but activities absorbed his time. D'Arcy
McNickle's thoughts were more often reflected in his novels. The characters in those
novels were his voice.

When applying for the job with the BIA, D'Arcy McNickle wrote not only about
his qualifications for the position and but also about his plans as an author.

I am writing of the West, not of Indians primarily, and certainly not of the romantic
West which best-selling authors have exploited to the detriment of a rational
understanding of the meaning of the West, the Frontier, in American life. I have
chosen the medium of fiction, first of all because I understand the story-telling art,
and in the second place I know by rationalization that fiction reaches a wider
audience than any other form of writing; and if it is good fiction it should tell a man
as much about himself as a text combining something of philosophy, psychology, a
little physiology, and some history, and should at the same time please his esthetic
sense, stir his emotions, and send him off with the will to make use of his best
quality, which is his understanding.109

In D'Arcy McNickle's first novel, The Surrounded, central character, Archilde, of
mixed-blood, like D'Arcy, himself, returns home from being years away at boarding
school. The story was originally entitled The Hungry Generations, from poet, John Keat's
Ode to a Nightengale, in which the poet makes reference to his envy of a bird's freedom to
escape the world where old age, decay, and death seem inevitable. And the first draft was
written by an author removed from the story. Archilde returns home to the reservation
only for a short time before escaping to Paris. As publishers continued to return the
manuscript to him, and as he became more knowledgeable about his own heritage through
his research, and reading, the story changed. In The Surrounded, Archilde returns home,
intending to say goodbye to reservation life, but he finds himself caught up in tribal affairs. Surrounded by tribal traditions and government institutions, he stays on the reservation with tragic results. The original ending of the story had reflected the 'American Dream'; offering the central character an escape without looking at alternatives. In the ending to The Surrounded, the character faced the reality of those who chose, and of those, who through circumstances, had no choice but to stay on the reservation. D'Arcy McNickle was beginning to face the realities of being Indian as well as other. Through his writing, he was becoming the man he had wanted to become.

Lawrence Towner, Librarian, and President of The Newberry Library, and a colleague of D'Arcy McNickle wrote the introduction to The Surrounded when it was reprinted in 1978. He described a man who crossed boundaries easily.

The Surrounded is as good as it is because it grew out of D'Arcy McNickle's most deeply felt experiences, because it is informed by his careful study of anthropology and history, and because it is shaped by his artistry. McNickle, indeed, was one of the most interesting and compelling men that I have ever met. Like his protagonist in The Surrounded, he was half Indian and half white, biologically. But in his essential self he was both totally Indian and totally 'European', a contradiction I had no difficulty in resolving when listening to him, but which I was at a loss to explain when he was absent. Perhaps it was that he was simply human.

I could visualize him as a free-lance writer in New York City; as an effective administrator in the Bureau of Indian Affairs; as the founding chairman of the Anthropology Department of the University of Saskatchewan; and as the founding director the The Newberry Library Center for the History of the American Indian. At the same time I could visualize him sitting in an interminable tribal council waiting patiently, with timeless understanding, for resolution through consensus of some difficult Indian issue. I have been at dinner with him at Washington's famous Jockey Club, where he elegantly selected the proper wine for the meal, and I could imagine him selecting with his hands, from a common pot, a choice tidbit of venison 'illegally' shot that day on an Indian reservation. 110

It took D'Arcy McNickle twenty years to finish writing his Novel, Wind From An
Enemy Sky. The book would be published posthumously in 1978. Like all of his writing, the story was based on his own life experience. In a letter to his publishers, he wrote: "I have just completed a novel, the setting for which is an Indian reservation in the Northwest--generalized from the reservation community in which I was born and the setting for an earlier novel, The Surrounded." What he wrote, had been from his own experience.

The idea for Wind From An Enemy Sky was carried around in my head for years. In 1937-38 I had participated in negotiations with the Museum of the American Indian (Heye Foundation) for the return to the Mandan Indians of a sacred (medicine) bundle, which the Museum had obtained in circumstances similar to those described in the story. The present draft of the novel is the last of many versions of the story I attempted over a twenty-year period. I experienced many interruptions in the writing, and each interruption seemed to result in a new approach to the material....About two years ago I returned to the manuscript and rewrote the entire script in six months.

Like all of what he wrote, the story was about miscommunication, among family members, and between cultures. Misunderstanding that inevitably resulted in tragedy for those concerned. In both The Surrounded and Wind From An Enemy Sky, we follow a man of mixed blood, returned from being years away at boarding school, through his adjustment and adaptation to what once had been home, but due to his own experience, has since become alien territory. In The Surrounded, the central character is Archilde, who must choose between the Indian and the white world. The Catholic priest tells Archilde's father what is ahead for his son. "It was inevitable that a new age could come. It is beginning now. And your boy is standing where the road divides. He belongs to a new time." In this story, Archilde is an individual, surrounded by circumstance, who acts alone with dire consequences.
This book has been described as D'Arcy McNickle's most autobiographical work. If all of his writing is to be seen as such, then his novel, *Wind From An Enemy Sky*, may be evidence of lessons learned. In this story, when central character, Antoine, comes home from school, he may feel alone but does not act apart from the group. He becomes an integral part of the tribe as interpreter. The story is about the Little Elk people who are gradually being displaced. Their water is being dammed up. A sacred medicine bundle has been removed and sent to a museum, where through indifference and neglect, it had been destroyed. The minister who had stolen the sacred medicine bundle explains his reason for taking it. "The Indian people start from origins about which we speculate but know next to nothing. We do know they are a people unlike us-- in attitude, in outlook, and in destination, unless we change that destination....Regardless of what we white men have attempted, the Indian has always remained beyond our reach...."

Museum display may seem to be a more comfortable attempt to capture the memory of a people.

But even compromise by those well-intended can go wrong. Although he does not appear until more than halfway through the book, in his correspondence with editor, Douglas Latimer, at Harper & Row, D'Arcy describes Indian Agent Pell as being a central character in the story. He writes that Pell is a composite of all of the 'friends of the Indians' that he has known over the years. And about Indian agent, Rafferty, he writes:

"Most critics of government policy in Indian affairs seem unaware of their own involvement in support of the very morality which informs that policy; and this is part of the argument of the book." \(^{115}\)

In an earlier letter to his editor, while making reference to *Wind From An Enemy*
D'Arcy McNickle could have been describing his purpose for all of what he wrote.

I guess the most general thing I can say is that I wanted to write about the Indian experience as objectively as possible; not just the usual story of the wronged Indian, but the greater tragedy of two cultures trying to accommodate each other. I would like the reader to see the Little Elk episode not as an isolated tragedy, about which one need not get too concerned, but as a critical statement about the quality of human behavior when people of different cultures meet. 116

D'Arcy McNickle's anthropological study, and the ethnographical and historical research he did in preparation of writing his non-fiction works contributed to his fiction writing. While doing research for They Came Here First, a history of the American Indian peoples, and for an article he wrote on North American Indians for the fourteenth edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica, he learned about traditions, and the history of many American Indian tribes. He was impressed by the fact that archeologists had found no evidence of warfare for almost six hundred years between the Anasazi people in present Arizona and their neighbors to the south.

He had been doing research for his novel, Wind From An Enemy Sky, when publishers, Holt, Rinehart and Winston asked him to contribute an Indian story to its Land of the Free series of juvenile historical fiction. D'Arcy McNickle's second novel, Runner in the Sun, was published in 1954. It was illustrated by Apache artist and sculptor, Alan Houser. A close friend of D'Arcy, Alfonso Ortiz writes: "The form of Runner in the Sun is noteworthy. The book is more explicitly connected with the oral tradition than are the author's other two novels. Everything about Runner suggests that it is a story about Indians told in an Indian way; that is to say, it resembles a story that is told more than one that is written." 117
D'Arcy introduces his story as a storyteller would begin.

Most of us grow up believing that the history of America begins with the men who came across from Europe and settled in New World wilderness. The real story of our country is much older, much richer, than this usual history book account.

Thousands of years before Europeans, by accident, stumbled upon the American continents, men were living here, scattered between the two polar oceans. They lived under a variety of conditions, and they developed tools, clothing, shelter, food habits, customs and beliefs to fit their conditions....without written records, but the shape and content of their lives have been pieced together by scientists examining the houses, tools, weapons, clothing, ceremonial objects, and other evidences of their existence....They were real people as were all the people Salt encountered on his journey south into the country we call Mexico. They lived, looking into the very skies we look into, hundreds of years before Columbus and his three little ships set sail from Isabella's Spain.

Scientists digging into old village sites tell us of tribes living side by side for hundreds of years without warfare. The myths and legends of the many tribes are not battle stories, but convey instead a feeling for the dignity of man and reverence for all of nature. Best of all evidence of the innate peace-seeking habits of the first Americans are the living Indian societies of today. Here one finds true concern for the well-being of each last member, respect for the elders, and devotion to the needs of the spirit....these were real people. They broke the trails which our railways and highways follow today. Their names are upon our land, upon the rivers, lakes, and mountains we love. They belong in the great tradition we call America.\textsuperscript{118}

About pre-Hispanic Indian life in the Southwest, and described by reviewers as combining the authenticity of an anthropological report with the suspense of a mystery novel, the story is about the adventures of Salt, member of the Turquoise Tribe who embarks on a quest to save his people from extinction. Through his travels, he learns about other tribes, other customs, and about himself, and the importance of acceptance of others and adaptation to circumstance. Salt is able to return to his people, and become a leader of the tribe. After its original publication, this book remained out of print until it was republished in 1987, with an afterword written by D'Arcy McNickle's friend, Alfonso
McNickle is well known for two other powerful novels, *The Surrounded* and *Wind From An Enemy Sky*, novels in which the conflict between white and Indian cultures is vividly depicted, and the sense of inevitable tragedy lingers in one's mind long after the novels are finished. *Runner* is far removed both in space and time from the other novels. The story is set among the 'cliff dwellers,' prehistoric Pueblo Indians of the Southwest, long before Columbus happened upon the Americas. At first blush, the novel might be taken as escapist literature, as it was written during the first years of the termination era of the 1950's, an especially tense and difficult time for the Indian tribes of this nation. This view might be reinforced by the fact that the novel was written originally for a juvenile audience.

However, anyone who knew D'Arcy at all well knows that it was not like him to write escapist literature. But this still begs the question: Why did he choose to write and publish a novel such as *Runner* in 1954? He had already been working on what would later become *Wind From An Enemy Sky* for about fifteen years, years during which he bemoaned the fact that he did not have the time to finish it. Why, then, did he drop that novel for a time to write *Runner* instead? The answer, I believe, is that *Runner* is not so very different in the concerns it expresses from the concerns the author expressed in his other writings, both fiction and nonfiction....the book repeatedly reaffirms the antiquity of the Indian people. Since they were here first, they are entitled to stay on their land and to survive as a people, culturally as well as physically. In this regard, *Runner* addresses the toughest challenge to face Indian people during the years when it was being written, their right to survive as a people. This, I believe, was D'Arcy's response to the tragic policy of termination. *Runner*, therefore, is not simply an innocent book for juveniles, although juveniles can always read it for profit and pleasure. Rather, D'Arcy is claiming for Indian people a reality apart from that granted to them by white people, and it is a reality whites cannot erase nor, eventually, fail to face.  

D'Arcy McNickle interrupted work on his second Novel, *Wind From An Enemy Sky*, to write *Runner in the Sun*. This could have been evidence of his firm belief in all possibilities for Indians. If *The Surrounded* and *Wind From An Enemy Sky* have been described as dark novels, they both offered lessons in hope. After Reading *Wind From An Enemy Sky*, Douglas Latimer wrote to D'Arcy McNickle. "It's a beautifully written and extremely moving story, told with great power. Bull's character is so strong, his death so
heroic and so inevitable, that it has all the elements of a Greek tragedy. It made me sad, but sad in a way which still uplifted my spirit.”

In *Runner in the Sun*, D'Arcy told the story of an individual who, through his travels, encountered, and learned respect for other cultures. He returned with new knowledge that improved living conditions for the people of his tribe. Salt does not act alone, like Archilde, neither does he lose himself in group thought and action, like Antoine. He takes a solitary journey for the purpose of helping his tribe learn about the survival habits of others; and in the process, he learns about himself. He returns as a leader, to build a future with his people. As an author, perhaps, the man is reflected.

Alfonso Ortiiz also writes about D'Arcy's influence upon others not only as author, but as teacher.

One of D'Arcy McNickle's favorite stories during the last fifteen years or so of his life concerned an experience he had with a Canadian Cree student at the University of Saskatchewan's Regina campus. D'Arcy was the founding chairman of the Department of Anthropology there, and he had this student in a survey course on Indians of the Americas. When D'Arcy came to the part in his course about civilizations of Mesoamerica, he showed slides of the temples and pyramids to accompany his lectures.

The young Cree student, who had heretofore sat quietly in the back of the class, suddenly began to show an extraordinary interest in the slides and discussions of Mesoamerica. Yet when that portion of the course was over, he suddenly disappeared. Day after day, week after week, his seat remained empty that winter. Then, less than a month after he left the course, he suddenly reappeared, looking tan and relaxed. D'Arcy was, understandably, not pleased, as the young man had missed a lot of classes, so he had him stay after class that day to explain himself. The student related how he had become fascinated with the monumental architecture of Mesoamerica and with the idea that Indians had erected those structures, and so he had decided to hitch-hike down there to see them for himself. On the way back, he had hitch-hiked up the West Coast of the United States, all in less than a month!

This story is not apocryphal, and D'Arcy retold it regularly to new listeners after he
left the university. I think he saw in this young Cree a latter-day and real 'Runner in the Sun'.

D'Arcy McNickle was an author and educator whose thorough research and presentation captured the interest and imagination. His own desire always to learn more about whatever he was learning was contagious. His interest in the past was for the purpose of building a better future. The present was always 'under construction'. He was born at a time when American Indians were becoming more legend, and less reality. He believed that the joining of all Indian peoples in Pan-Indian show of strength would make a better future. Throughout his life; in his work as anthropologist, historian, and educator, he worked to show that 'culture' was not a label, but an active, ongoing process.

During his lifetime, he could have remained removed, following his own individual way, or he could have become minority victim. While he was a thoughtful man, he did not allow doubt or hesitation to inhibit him. Whether or not he realized his own limitations, he kept moving forward, making a path for others to follow. If D'Arcy McNickle, the man, is not well-known, his legacy remains. He sent an American Indian voice. What could have become only the echo of a people has become their own resounding chorus.

No smoke would rise from cooking fires; no life would be visible. Sun and shadow alone would be there. But listening carefully, it might seem, after a while, that sounds were rising from the canyon depths. Voices would be chanting faintly. The dead air would stir between the rock walls. The lazily vaulting eagle would clap its wings in startled energy and sail away.

Now in the dawn before it dies, the eagle swings low and wide in a great arc, curving downward to the place of origin. There is no wind, but there is a long roaring on the air. It is like the wind-- nor is it quite like the wind-- but more powerful.

We have stories as old as the great seas breaking through the chest flying out the
mouth, noisy tongues that once were silenced, all the oceans we contain coming to light.

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ENDNOTES


7. Ibid.


25. Ibid., 240-241.


30. Parker, 108.


32. Ibid., 1-2.

33. Parker, 153-154.


36. Ruppert, 50.

37. Ibid., 48-49.


41. Ruppert, 33.


43. Ruppert, 38.

44. Ibid., 41-42.

45. Ibid., 45.
46. Ibid., 46-47.

47. Ibid., 38.

48. Ibid., 48.


52. Ruppert, 15.

53. Parker, 248.


55. Workshop on American Indian Affairs, "Students Discuss Teachers", *The Indian Progress Newsletter*, American Indian Development, Inc. (AID) in cooperation with the University of Colorado (summer 1960).

56. (Participant Interview), Workshop on American Indian Affairs, "Roving Reporter", *The Indian Progress Newsletter*, American Indian Development, Inc. (AID) in cooperation with the University of Colorado (summer 1960).

57. (Participant Interview), Ibid.

58. (Participant Interview), Ibid.

59. (Participant Interview), Ibid.


61. Workshop on American Indian Affairs, "Roving Reporter", *The Indian Progress Newsletter*, American Indian Development, Inc. (AID) in cooperation with the University of Colorado (summer 1961).

63. (Participant Interview), Workshop on American Indian Affairs, "Roving Reporter", The Indian Progress Newsletter, American Indian Development, Inc. (AID) in cooperation with the University of Colorado (summer 1964).

64. (Participant Interview), Ibid.

65. (Participant Interview), Ibid.

66. (Participant Interview), Ibid.

67. (Participant Interview), Workshop on American Indian Affairs, "Roving Reporter", The Indian Progress Newsletter, American Indian Development, Inc. (AID) in cooperation with the University of Colorado (summer 1964).

68. (Participant Interview), Ibid.

69. (Participant Interview), Workshop on American Indian Affairs, "Roving Reporter", The Indian Progress Newsletter, American Indian Development, Inc. (AID) in cooperation with the University of Colorado (summer 1963).

70. (Participant Interview), Ibid.


72. (Participant Interview), Workshop on American Indian Affairs, "Roving Reporter", The Indian Progress Newsletter, American Indian Development, Inc. (AID) in cooperation with the University of Colorado (summer 1961).

73. (Participant Interview), Ibid.

74. (Participant Interview), Ibid.

75. (Participant Interview), Workshop on American Indian Affairs, "Roving Reporter", The Indian Progress Newsletter, American Indian Development, Inc. (AID) in cooperation with the University of Colorado (summer 1961).

76. Parker, 247.

77. D'Arcy McNickle, Letter to Dr. Frederick Wacker, 1 February 1975,


83. Parker, 244.

84. Ibid., 244.

85. Ibid., 244.

86. Ibid., 244.

87. Ibid., 244.


90. Parker, 247.

91. Ibid., 254.

92. Ibid., 255.

93. Ibid., 255.

94. Parker, 254.
95. Ibid., 248.


97. Ibid., 123.


102. Ruppert, 17.


108. Parker, 56.


CHAPTER 4

CHORUS - Of those who come after

Contribution and legacy

...he moved up a trail that was not there, and when the wind paused and seemed to listen, his own voice sang steadily on, as if to encourage the wind.

D'Arcy McNickle, *Wind From An Enemy Sky*¹

...The song was not in words so much as in the rising and falling sounds, like wind among pine trees.

D'Arcy McNickle, *Wind From An Enemy Sky*²

...a truth which travels at the side of everything else, as night travels with day, and as death travels at the side of life: man lives in the face of many enemies. His life is a gift, given without his asking, and payment must be made to the giver. A man may try to avoid the payment, but he is a fool if he thinks he can escape and keep the whole gift to himself.

D'Arcy McNickle, *Runner in the Sun*³

It is not for us to say whether any man has lived his life well,...Each man can answer only for himself.

D’Arcy McNickle, *Runner in the Sun*⁴

We are what we imagine. Our very existence consists in our imagination of ourselves....The greatest tragedy that can befall us is to go unimagined.

N. Scott Momaday, *The Gourd Dancer- Poems*⁵

D'Arcy McNickle was very much a man of his time. Such description may be
overused expression of admiration for so many others. However, this can no more truly be said of a man who was not only influenced by current events and past historical development, but who, as he struggled to find his own place, and even once he had found it, contributed much to the recreation of a people-- the American Indian people. If he did not, at first, identify himself as being Indian, then it was certainly fortuitous circumstance that his study of the past brought him to the realization of his own proud heritage. For D'Arcy McNickle would have made a difference whatever past he had, because it was who he was.

Throughout his life, he remained hungry for knowledge, for experience, for better understanding of circumstance, of himself, and of others. He realized that people were at the heart of all that he hungered for. His sincere interest in, and efforts to communicate with individuals enabled him not only to become the wise person that he became, but also, to influence others. If he has been described by friends as not being of any one place; of being comfortable wherever he was, and whoever he was with, it was because of his sincere interest. His humility, wry sense of humor, and great heart made D'Arcy McNickle who he was.

Not only a good person, perhaps, because he was a good person, he was a careful and a thorough scholar. As anthropologist and historian, and author, he remained meticulous researcher. If people were at the heart of history, then only by learning and recording as much of the truth that could be known could a fair and comprehensive story of the past be told. And only upon such firm and honest foundation could a better future be built.
McNickle was not the kind of historian who only studied and recorded the past. As he learned, he prepared himself, recognizing what best action to take for the present and the future. And he knew that one man, or one group could not write the history of all people. If D'Arcy McNickle learned to respect American Indian peoples, even being part Indian, he did not presume knowledge of an expert. He was an especially effective administrator and teacher because his respect was never passive acclamation, but served to define his expectations of responsibilities that must be met. His place was, as he told his students, to devise ways by which people could learn. His colleagues described him as a mediator who would carefully listen and observe. He was the man who, in discussion, would wait for the air to clear, for tempers to cool, and for thinking to resume so that sincere attempt at understanding and communication could begin again. He always acted to educate, to prepare others, to remind them to make a difference.

Was he aware of the difference he made, of his own influence? He changed the minds and hearts of many people during his lifetime. The legacy he left is that those he influenced continue to make a difference. Throughout his life, his concern, and his work was to increase knowledge, improve communication, engender understanding among people. His interest was so much in others that his primary concern, perhaps, was how much knowledge he could absorb from them, and how much he could give back. Would he have been pleased by the legacy he, himself, left? More probably, he would not even have been aware of it because he realized himself as only part of an ongoing process.

If D'Arcy McNickle, the man, himself, is not remembered, it is no matter. What matters is that he changed the minds and hearts of all those he encountered, and they
passed it on. They continue to pass it on. Tribal histories are being written, notice of a people is being made, many more voices are being heard. His legacy is more powerful than the man. His influence is more of a whisper, as he whispered words of encouragement in his daughter’s ear, more like background music to peoples' lives, like a song.

McNickle’s educational influence is evidenced by his own personal example and by the way in which he chose to live his life. He was a life long learner who perservered and continued in his pursuit of knowledge, despite interruption of his formal education. Throughout his life, he did not hesitate to challenge common practice and belief, whatever was required of him.

At the beginning of his career, he wrote a series of letters in an attempt to place himself in the position of being able to work with those he admired. While D’Arcy awaited responses to those letters, he continued to work on his first novel, and to write short stories. McNickle realized the responsibility was his to make things happen, to create a future for himself.

As D’Arcy McNickle learned more about the history of Native Americans, he realized a responsibility to his people. He began to look for ways in which he could contribute to increasing the knowledge of and about Native Americans. He established corporations and created workshops that would educate Native Americans about their own history and enable them to become responsible for building a future of their own.

McNickle’s writings helped unite Native Americans in Pan-Indian awareness of valuable history and shared experience. As Indians learned to stand and work together in
preparation for the future, others began to recognize Native Americans as a force to be reckoned with.

McNickle educated, enabled, encouraged and empowered -- himself, Native Americans, students and colleagues. As the best teacher would do, he presented the information, created the opportunity and knew when to step back; to take time-- to light his pipe, to allow for his own and others thinking, to listen for the voices of others.

Suggestions for further study

"What Did You See? What Did You Learn? What Will You Remember?"

There have been many who have studied and written about D'Arcy McNickle as an author of fiction. His novels have been analyzed not only in terms of content and contribution, but also as evidence of biographical fact; indication of the kind of person that D'Arcy McNickle was. More attention paid to McNickle's non-fiction; the five histories, and numerous articles he wrote, would prove a valuable study, especially for the historian.

D'Arcy McNickle's novels contributed to American Indians' cultural awareness and esteem. As an American Indian author, his novels were recognized for their literary merit by established scholars. He was one of the first American Indian historians whose thoroughly researched history; inclusion of past events and present circumstance, evidenced the ongoing nature of conditions and concerns of American Indians. Prior to his authorship, American Indian history, written by American Indians, had been limited to biographical and autobiographical accounts dictated to non-Indian writers. Language not
shared and conflicting intent often proscribed accuracy. A study more exclusively focused upon McNickle's non-fiction would contribute not only to current knowledge about American Indians from American Indian perspective, but to the study of historiography as well. For the scholar who would be interested in learning more about D'Arcy McNickle, a study made of his correspondance would be worthwhile; particularly the letters he wrote beginning in 1935, at the time of his initial employment with John Collier, of the BIA. Every letter he wrote, and all of his business correspondance; every letter, whether it be addressed to another colleague, or to his publishers, contained not only business information, but also, sharing of plans, advice given, references made. Like his journals, the letters of D'Arcy McNickle reveal a great deal about the kind of person he was. There is some reference made to record kept of letters exchanged by the McNickle children prior to, and during the Chemawa years. Although this collection is not in the D'Arcy McNickle Collection at The Newberry Library at this time, it may be possible to locate and study these letters for better idea of the McNickle children's sibling relationship.

While the correspondance of McNickle would prove interesting study, all of which is certainly illustrative of the man, how he handled business affairs, what he believed important; a careful reading of the journals he kept in his later years would be valuable research. From 1940, on, it becomes increasingly difficult to read the writing in McNickle's journal. It may well have been because he was too busy 'doing', and spending so much less time, looking inward. What McNickle was doing in the later years of his life has not been studied enough. D'Arcy McNickle influenced initiation of formalized American Indian scholarship, and encouraged a united American Indian political voice.
His work with The Newberry Library, and the Pan-Indian Movement is only part of the contribution he made.

Being an independent man, he chose to work within the federal system, with John Collier, as Administrative Assistant at the BIA during the beginning of the 'New Deal' for American Indians, and later, with other government representatives to ensure that the necessary changes be made to improve not only basic living conditions, but future opportunities for all American Indians. A fine study could be made about the duo, D'Arcy McNickle and John Collier, their relationship, their activities and achievements during their tenure at the BIA. It is important to learn more about D'Arcy McNickle during this period of his life.

For the oral historian, unafraid of what would be an ambitious undertaking, interviews of those who knew and worked with D'Arcy McNickle, American Indians, and others; including colleagues, students, and friends, could make a difference in rendering D'Arcy McNickle's influence less obscure. Throughout his life, D'Arcy McNickle may have believed himself to be an ordinary man, and indeed, may have appeared to others to be so. As an author, he chose to write fiction because he realized that through his writing, he could reach a wide audience. But the legacy he left was more complex. His contribution remains limited only by the limited focus of scholars.

Further research will make others more aware of the legacy left by D'Arcy McNickle; of the part he played in sending a voice for all American Indians, and the example he set for all scholars. However profound D'Arcy McNickle's influence, whether his song is heard or not, remains with the scholars who follow him; American Indians and
others, who choose, or not, to listen to his song and to take up the singing.
ENDNOTES


2. Ibid., 239.


4. Ibid., 229.

APPENDIX

D'ARCY MCNICKLE - LIFE TIMELINE

1904  4 January William D'Arcy McNickle born to Philomene Parenteau, Metis Indian, and William McNickle, Irish, on the Flathead Reservation at St. Ignatius, Montana. He is the youngest of three children, and the only son.

1905  D'Arcy McNickle, sisters Ruth Elizabeth and Florence Lea, and their mother, Philomene are officially enrolled as members of the Flathead Indian Tribe by William McNickle. Their blood affiliation is listed as Cree, not Metis, which is a Canadian tribe.

1913  Philomene and William McNickle divorce. Fight for custody of the children begins. The McNickle children are enrolled at the Salem Indian Training School in Chemawa, Oregon.

1916  Philomene succeeds in gaining custody of D'Arcy. He returns to Montana to live with his mother and her third husband, Gus Dahlberg. Ruth and Florence would remain at Chemawa another year.

1921  June D'Arcy (Dahlberg) McNickle graduates from high school. September He enrolls at Montana State University.

1925  He sells his land allotment to finance additional schooling. He leaves the reservation and will not return except for infrequent visits over the year. His maternal grandfather, Isador dies in the spring. Old Isador, the poem he writes as tribute to his grandfather, wins first prize in a statewide contest sponsored by The Missoulian, the local newspaper. D'Arcy leaves the University. He will never earn a college degree.

1925  September-December D'Arcy McNickle travels to England in hopes of continued study at Oxford University, in England.

1926  January-May He spends a brief time in Paris.

1926-  The New York Years, described by D'Arcy McNickle as a period of 'confusion'. While in New York, he periodically attends courses at the New School for Social Research, and at Columbia University.

1926  D'Arcy McNickle and Joran Birkeland are married.

1927  He works on the staff of the Encyclopaedia Britannica.

1929  He becomes assistant to the managing editor at James T. White and Company, publishers of the National Cyclopaedia of American Biography. He enrolls at Columbia University.

1930  He begins to read history. Only able to afford two classes, he is still unable to finish a degree.

1931  D'Arcy and Joran spend six weeks travelling through France. He attends some classes at the University of Grenoble, in France for one semester.

1933  He attends some classes at Columbia University, in New York. D'Arcy Dahlberg becomes D'Arcy McNickle.

1934  January Antoinette Parenteau McNickle, D'Arcy and Joran's first child, is born.

1935  He is accepted for a staff position with the Federal Writers Project.

1936  He is hired as administrative assistant to John Collier, Commissioner of Indian Affairs at the Bureau of Indian Affairs, BIA.


1938  D'Arcy and Joran divorce.

1938  D'Arcy McNickle and Roma Kauffman are married.

1939  John Collier appoints D'Arcy McNickle as one of several Indian delegates to attend the Canadian Conference on North American Indians jointly hosted by the University of Toronto and Yale University.

1941  Kathleen McNickle, D'Arcy and Roma's daughter is born.

1944  The National Congress of American Indians, NCAI, meets for the first time. D'Arcy McNickle, one of its founders, helps to draft NCAI Constitution.
He encourages tribes to unite on a national political level in order to protect their rights.

1945  John Collier resigns from the BIA  D'Arcy McNickle remains


1952  D'Arcy McNickle resigns from the BIA

He serves as director of NCAI created American Indian Development, AID, the funds finance leadership training and group development in Indian communities

1954  He is appointed as visiting lecturer at Regis College in Denver, Colorado


1955  He receives a citation from the National Congress of American Indians for distinguished service to Native Americans

He serves as member of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission

He serves on the Fellowship Awards Committee of the John Whitney Heye Foundation

1959-

1966  Funded by AID, he founds and directs the Workshop on American Indian Affairs in cooperation with the University of Colorado, as a summer leadership workshop for Indian college students


1966  D'Arcy McNickle receives an honorary doctorate from The University of Colorado

He becomes Associate Professor, with chairman responsibilities to setup and staff a small anthropology department at the new Regina campus, at the University of Saskatchewan

1967  D'Arcy and Roma divorce

1969  D'Arcy McNickle and Vi Pfrommer are married, and remain so until her death in 1977

1970  He becomes full Professor at the University of Saskatchewan


This book is nominated for a National Book Award

1971  D'Arcy McNickle retires from the University

He moves to Albuquerque, New Mexico

1972  He is asked to become the program director of The Newberry Library's Center for the History of the American Indian by Librarian and Director, Lawrence W. Towner (Chicago, Illinois)


1977  He is nominated for the position of Distinguished Research Fellow by The Newberry Library Board of Directors

He dies days before receiving this honor

1977  15 October  D'Arcy McNickle dies of a massive coronary in Albuquerque, New Mexico


1983  Antoinette McNickle donates her father's papers to The Newberry Library, and The D'Arcy McNickle Center for the History of the American Indian is named in his honor

1987  The new library at the Salish Kootenai College on the Flathead Reservation in Pablo, Montana; The D'Arcy McNickle Library is named in his honor
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**OTHER WORKS**


VITA

Bonnie Jean Adams is from the Chicago area. An experienced teacher and administrator, she holds a B.A. in Speech & Drama from Barat College-Lake Forest, IL and a M.A. in Administration & Supervision from Concordia University-River Forest, IL.
The dissertation submitted by Bonnie Jean Adams has been read and approved by the following committee:

Dr. Gerald Gutek, Ph.D., Director
Professor, Educational Leadership & Policy Studies
Loyola University Chicago

Dr. Janis Fine, Ph.D.
Professor, Educational Leadership & Policy Studies

Dr. Steven Miller, Ph.D.
Professor, Educational Leadership & Policy Studies

The final copies have been examined by the director of the dissertation committee and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that this dissertation is now given final approval by the committee with reference to content and form.

This dissertation is, therefore, accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Ph.D., Educational Leadership & Policy Studies with focus on Historical Foundations.

October 31, 1997
Date

Gerald Gutek
Director's Signature