

**TO HISTORY / WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**  
**A Letter from Allies of the Indigenous Silenced**

Two: **War/Games\*\***

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a short spoken word poem play  
for reading performances

*written*  
for 5 voices, or 1 to X\*,  
with  $\geq$  half = POC,  
Indigenous preferred

*written*  
for the Protest Plays Project's  
*Heal the Divide* Initiative

*written*  
on these pages, these white pages,  
these slivers of souls of gone trees,  
in Indigenous Blood Stories-as-ink

*written*  
in the hope of opening eyes and efforts

*written*  
in the hope of recognizing  
Indigenous Silenced, past, present

*written*  
in the hope of helping to inspire  
positive healing urgent united actions  
so we together can help un-write an  
Indigenous Silenced, Future

by

Jaisey Bates

[the-peoplehood.com](http://the-peoplehood.com)

\*

For casts of < 5 or > 5, assign consecutive numbers (or random: i.e., pick them from a basket) and chronologically round robin The Numbers.

For the reading it is preferred that The Numbers are situated in non-chronological / non clockwise, mixed order as this adds texture, dimension.

\*\*

The playwright has donated The Protest Plays' *Heal The Divide* commission fee for this piece to



in support of its work “against derogatory and harmful stereotypes of Native people—including sports mascots—in media and popular culture.”

Learn more: [www.ncai.org/proudtobe](http://www.ncai.org/proudtobe).

#### **SPECIAL THANKS**

To **Mr. Martin Neptune**, Penobscot Elder, for his permission to share his eloquent and powerful words with all who read this play.

Notes:

At least half of cast is of color or mixed heritage, Indigenous preferred.

No Native in your group?

Outreach to Indigenous groups in your area.

Unsure where to go?

Playwright is happy to aid your efforts in creating Indigenous connections within your community.

Suggestions:

a ceremony circle with The Numbers interspersed amongst audience. In the center, created in collaboration with your Indigenous community:

activities

(giving thanks to the Indigenous people of the ground on which you stand, an opening blessing, smudge, traditional dance/music, etc.)

and/or items

(i.e. a Pendleton blanket or star quilt with post-reading takeaways with further info/How You Can Help History Hear Indigenous Voices).

The Honoring of Indigenous Voices.

Optional: a basket with Indigenous folks' words re: mascots, etc. handed round so everyone including each audience member holds (carries the weight of, honors) their words. To help gather Native Words to honor during this ceremony please share [www.the-peoplehood.com/to-history](http://www.the-peoplehood.com/to-history) with Native groups then email [the.peoplehood@gmail.com](mailto:the.peoplehood@gmail.com) and playwright will share the responses received.

No edits, revision, or altering of text.

[...] Indicates elided text from the original. No pause or other notice taken of these omissions.

No acting experience needed.

No 'acting', irony, mannered presentation,  
assumed accents, affectations, etc.

Simple open-hearted organic renderings,  
offerings, with the highest stakes: you have

one chance,  
this chance,

this world of  
words in which to

write to History  
as Allies of

Indigenous  
America.

May  
History

at  
last

Hear.

TO HISTORY / WHOM IT MAY CONCERN  
A Letter from Allies of the Indigenous Silenced

TWO: War / Games

*We prepare to write.*

1: *We prepare to write.*

ALL: TODAY

1: [speak day of week]

2: [speak month]

3: [speak day of month]

4: [speak year]

ALL: WE

5: of different heritages, of different paths come together

1: here on this Indigenous ground,

2: here on this contested,

3: conquered,

4: stolen land to

ALL: STAND

5: beside the indigenous Silenced.

ALL: WE

1: – a community –

2: take this moment to acknowledge,

3: honor and give thanks to  
4: the ancestors of this land. Together  
5: we gather our courage. Together  
1: we raise our words,  
2: we raise silenced words,  
3: we raise our pen –  
1: our offering –  
2: over this shared page in our lives,  
3: in this place, this shared  
4: space of moments when we will  
ALL: WRITE  
5: here, together, as Allies of  
1: the Indigenous Silenced – standing beside  
2: the Indigenous Silenced –  
3: this letter,  
4: this song,  
5: this prayer,  
1: this plea to  
ALL: HISTORY  
2: To  
3: Whom  
4: It

5: May

1: Concern.

2: Here is our letter.

3: Here is our song.

4: May History

ALL: AT LAST

5: Hear.

*We write.*

1: *We write:*

ALL: WAR.

1: On November 3, 1755

2: the Boston Council Chamber

3: in the Province of Massachusetts

4: ratified Lieutenant Governor Spencer Phips'

5: Proclamation which declared Penobscot

ALL: "Indians [...]

1&5: Enemies,

2&3: Rebels

4: and Traitors" [...]

5: and required

1&5: "Subjects

4: of this Province to

2&3: Embrace

5: all opportunities of

1&5 pursuing, [...]

2&3 killing

4: and Destroying

5: all and every of



1: the

2: afore

3: said

ALL: Indians.”

4: The Council Chamber

5: resolved the Treasury would,

1: starting November 25<sup>th</sup>,

2: pay bounty

3: for each Penobscot

4: captive, or

3: on each Penobscot

4: scalp, whether:

1&5: man,

2&3: woman

4: or child.

1&5: Or child?

2&3: Or child?

*Beat.*

4: Or child.

*Beat.*

*We write.*

1: *We write:*

ALL: GAMES.

1: On November 4, 2017

2: the Skowhegan Area

3: Chamber of Commerce

4: in Maine posted:

*Chipper:*

5: "Please join

ALL: us

1&5: for

4: the first annual

ALL: Hunt

1&5: for

4: the

ALL: Indian!"

*Aghast:*

5: The First Annual 'HUNT for the INDIAN'?

*Chipper:*

1: The first annual hunt for

2: a small wooden replica –

*Aghast:*

5: You can't be serious – a WOODEN INDIAN?

*Chipper:*

1: The first annual hunt for

2: a small wooden replica

3: of the town's "iconic"

4: Skowhegan Indian

1: sculpture, by artist

2: Bernard Langlais.

*Aghast:*

5: Please tell me he's not White – the artist's not White.

*Chipper:*

3: – the town's "iconic"

4: Skowhegan Indian

1: sculpture, by artist

2: – White artist – Bernard Langlais.

1-4: Wait,

3: where were we? Are we?

1-4: O:

3: "Please join us for  
4: the first annual  
ALL: Hunt  
5: for  
1: the  
ALL: Indian!  
1: From November 24<sup>th</sup> [...]  
2: the Chamber  
3: will visit  
4: a participating Member's location [...]  
ALL: Together,  
5: we will place  
1: the Indian  
2: somewhere[...] After  
1: the Indian  
2: is placed,  
3: we will take  
4: a picture  
3: and post  
4: it to the  
1: Chamber's  
2: Face

3: book

4: page, asking:

ALL: 'Where am I?'"

*Aghast:*

5: Where am I?

*Chipper:*

1: Skowhegan,

2: Maine.

3: You're in

4: Skowhegan, Maine, asking

ALL: "'Where am I?'

1: When customers

2: visit your

3: business,

4: if they are

5: able to locate

1: the Indian

2: they will

3: receive

4: a small

5: discount [...]

1: At the  
2: end  
3: of the day  
ALL: we  
4: will [...]  
5: collect  
1: the Indian. [...]  
ALL: We  
2: hope  
3: the  
4: Hunt  
5: for  
1: the Indian  
2: will encourage  
3: shoppers  
4: to Shop Local  
5: and boost your sales”[...]

*Beat.*

*We write.*

1: *We write:*

ALL: WAR.

2: An education

3: for

4: extinction:

5: Boarding

ALL: SCHOOLS.

5: Their motto:

ALL: "Kill

1: the Indian

2: and save

3: the Man."

1: On November 1, 1879,

4: Captain Richard Henry Pratt

5: under authority of the US federal government

1: formerly opened

2: the Carlisle Indian Industrial School

3: in Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

4: This school

5: became the model, the

- 1: template for
- 2: 26 BIA
- 3: boarding schools,
- 4: and for hundreds of
- 5: religious
- 1: denomination
- 2: sponsored
- 3: boarding schools.
- 1: From 1879 through 1918
- 4: over ten thousand
- 5: Native children
- 1: from 140 tribes
- 2: attended Carlisle
- 3: Indian
- 4: School.
- 5: Native children
- 1: were forced
- 2: to leave their
- 3: families and
- 4: travel far.
- 5: Native children
- 1: were forced



2: to surrender their

3: cultures,

4: languages,

5: religions,

ALL: names.

5: Some ran away.

1: Were found.

2: Were returned.

3: Many were sent home to die.

4: Many died at the school. They were

5: buried at the school.

1: Many are still

2: there, still

3: waiting

4: to hear

5: their names,

1: their true

2: names, still

3: waiting

4: to come

5: Home.

*Beat.*

*We write.*

1: *We write:*

ALL: GAMES.

2: An education

3: for

4: extinction:

5: Sports

ALL: MASCOTS.

5: Symbols.

1: Stereotypes.

2: Caricatures. Costumes –

3: a mockery of sacred regalia.

4: Chants. War whoops.

5: War paint.

1: War path:

ALL: “KILL

1: the Indian.”

2: Scalp

3: towels.

4: Tomahawk

5: chops.

*Beat.*

1: *We write.*

2: We work.

1: *We write.*

3: We seek

4: an education for

5: Awareness.

2: Inclusion.

3: Understanding.

4: Empathy.

5: Respect.

1: *We write.*

2: *We write.*

ALL: WE WRITE:

1: On November 5<sup>th</sup>

2: the Skowhegan Area Chamber of Commerce posted:

3: “Never were we so wrong in thinking that this [...] promotion involving the [...] Skowhegan Indian statue would be a good idea.

4: This event has been canceled.

5: It was never our intention to offend anyone, quite the opposite. [...]

1: Now we understand

2: we’ve created a bigger problem of not seeing our actions from others’ perspectives

3: given the local and national issues

4: around mascots

5: and racism.

1: No apology

2: can take away

3: our lack of empathy

4: and foresight

5: in this decision.”

*Beat.*

1: On November 5<sup>th</sup>

2: Mr. Martin Neptune,

3: a Penobscot Elder,

4: responded:

5: “The apology is just another example of how dehumanizing mascots are.

1: We are now similar to ‘Elf [on a Shelf]’!

2: Just another fictionalized character!

3: And they don't see anything wrong with that?!

4: The ignorance is mind boggling!

5: And to those that say this is a recent issue,

1: I am a Penobscot elder that fought racism, stereotyping, and mascots

2: in the 60's and 70's, starting with the Old Town [High School] ‘Indians’.

3: We were pretty much ignored, [...] told that we were being ‘honored’.

- 4: I participated in a sensitivity training session at the local high school.
- 5: It wasn't mandatory for staff to attend.
- 1: We had a good turnout but the ones with the worst racist attitudes refused to attend.
- 2: Looking back, I don't think it would have made a difference with them.
- 3: Racism seems to be passed down in families.
- 4: The good news is that some of these young people question their parents' attitudes and break the cycle.
- 5: It's been years since I've been on the front line in these battles.
- 1: I've seen positive change over the years,
- 2: but it saddens and frustrates me
- 3: to see my children and grandchildren
- 4: still fighting the ignorance and racism in their world.
- ALL: HOWEVER,
- 5: I will not give up –
- ALL: HOPE.
- 1: I have –
- ALL: FAITH
- 1: in the younger generation!
- 2: Keep up the good fight
- 3: and keep educating yourself
- 4: and others
- 5: about our shared –

ALL: HUMANITY!"

*Beat.*

1: In September 2005

2: the American

3: Psychological

4: Association

5: issued a resolution: [...]

ALL: "WHEREAS

1: the continued use of American Indian MASCOTS, symbols, images, and personalities

2: undermines the educational experiences of members of all communities [...].

ALL: WHEREAS

3: the continued use of American Indian mascots, SYMBOLS, images, and personalities

4: establishes an unwelcome and often times hostile learning environment for American Indian students that affirms negative images/stereotypes that are promoted in mainstream society.

ALL: WHEREAS

5: the continued use of American Indian mascots, symbols, IMAGES, and personalities

1: by school systems appears to have a negative impact on the self-esteem of American Indian children.

ALL: WHEREAS

2: the continued use of American Indian mascots, symbols, images, and PERSONALITIES

3: undermines the ability of American Indian Nations to portray accurate and respectful images of their culture, spirituality, and traditions.

ALL: WHEREAS

4: the continued use of AMERICAN Indian mascots, symbols, images, and personalities

5: presents stereotypical images of American Indian communities [...]. [...]

ALL: WHEREAS

1: the continued use of American INDIAN mascots, symbols, images, and personalities

2: is an offensive and intolerable practice to American Indian Nations that must be eradicated. [...]

ALL: THEREFORE

1&5: BE

2&4 IT

ALL: RESOLVED

3: [...] that the American Psychological Association supports and recommends the immediate retirement of Indian mascots, symbols, images, and personalities by schools, colleges, universities, athletic teams, and organizations.”

*We hold our letter to the sky.*

1: *We hold*

2: *our letter*

3: *to the sky.*

4: Today,

ALL: together,

5: here,

1: now,

ALL: WE STAND

2: beside

3: the Indigenous

4: Silenced.

ALL: Together

5: here,

1: now,

ALL: WE RAISE

5: our words,

1: our voices,

2: our pen,

3: our shared pen,

4: over this page,



5: this shared page

1: in our lives, in

2: this place, this

3: shared

4: space of moments.

ALL: Together

5: here,

1: now,

ALL: WE WRITE

1: as

2: Allies

3: of

4: the

ALL: Indigenous

5: Silenced –

1: standing

2: beside

3: the

ALL: Indigenous

4: Silenced –

5: this letter,

1: this song,

2: this prayer,

3: this plea to

ALL: HISTORY

4: To

5: Whom

1: It

2: May

3: Concern.

ALL: Here

4: is our letter.

ALL: Here

5: is our song.

1: We hold our voices to the sky.

2: We stand as Allies of the Indigenous Silenced.

3: We honor their voices

4: until

ALL: History,

4: at last,

ALL: hears.

5: We must help History hear. Because:

1: There's a structure

2: under construction

3: for a couple centuries, in the garden that is our shared home.

4: Its bones

5: are broken treaties, endless oppressions. Stolen

1: lands, children, languages. Lives.

2: Its joints

3: are greased with blood.

4: It's rising up,

5: monstrous.

1: Ravenous.

2: It eats Indigenous voices.

3: Because:

4: This structure is a story.

5: Those in power wrote it. Built it.

1: Are writing it. Building it.

2: They call it History.

3: Because:

4: In these days of days if our home is to survive,

5: if we wish to work toward a world

1: worthy

2: of our children's

3: bright

4: promise,

5: and of theirs, we need to do more

1: than watch as

2: History opens

3: its eyes. As

4: It opens

5: Its mouth.

*Sunrise,*

*accept this offering.*

*Sunrise.*

-- Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony*