

and yet unable to cope with life off the reservation. Unemployed, alcoholic, and destitute, Hayes died of exposure on a cold January night in 1955.

Fortunately, the story of Ira Hayes was not typical of the postwar experience of most Indian veterans. Many who returned to the reservations successfully ran for tribal office and became the core of a new generation of Native American leaders. The entire council of elders on the Tohono O'odham reservation resigned after the war, deferring to the leadership of the younger men who were returning home. A former code talker became a tribal judge on the Navajo reservation, and several others were elected to the council. A nineteen-year-old Sioux veteran became tribal chairman on the Lower Brule reservation. These new tribal leaders proved to be a powerful force for change, but they also were intent on preserving many aspects of traditional culture.

Although the leaders' wartime experiences increased immeasurably their exposure to the larger world, the experiences also contributed to a greater awareness and respect for the old ways of their own world. Kiowa veterans in Oklahoma revived the military Black Legs Society (*Tokongwa*), singing once again the old songs and dancing the dances of their warrior ancestors. Army veteran Joseph Medicine Crow became a chief on his Montana reservation because of his deeds of heroism in Europe during the war. His deeds were performed in this most modern of wars, far from Crow country, but took on an added significance because they fulfilled the traditional requirements for tribal leadership. He later recalled:

When I went to Germany I never thought about war honors, or the four "coups" which an old-time Crow warrior had to earn in battle. Those days were gone. But afterwards, when I came back and went through this telling of the war deeds ceremony, why, I told my war deeds, and lo and behold I completed the four requirements to become a chief.

The returning veterans became outspoken advocates for greater access to educational opportunities for Native people. Their training and work experiences during the war had convinced them of the importance of education if they were to compete successfully in the postwar economy. The Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944, better known as the GI Bill, provided financial aid for all veterans who wished to continue their education. One Navajo veteran later said, "the most advantageous deal that ever came through was the GI bill, and that gave me an opportunity to go to school." Hundreds of Indians en-

rolled in agricultural training programs and a wide variety of vocational and technical schools. Others completed their high school diplomas and went on to seek higher education at colleges and universities throughout the United States.

Returning Indian veterans and defense workers, emboldened by their experiences during the war, were impatient to obtain full rights as American citizens. Just as an earlier generation of veterans had won American citizenship following World War I, the veterans of World War II worked to remove any remaining barriers to full equality. At the war's end, provisions in the state constitutions of Arizona and New Mexico still denied Indian citizens the right to vote. Returning veterans found this continued denial of suffrage to be unacceptable. "We went to Hell and back for what?" asked one outraged Navajo veteran. "For the people back home in America to tell us we can't vote!" Other Indian veterans argued cogently, "If we are good enough to fight, why aren't we good enough to vote?" The veterans pressed their case before congressional committees and began litigation to secure their voting rights. During the summer of 1948, courts in Arizona and New Mexico decided in favor of the Indians, ruling that the constitutions of both states had violated the Indians' civil rights under the Fifteenth Amendment.

Victories in other battles were slower in coming but eventually resulted in the removal of two particularly galling barriers to full civil rights for Native Americans. Ever since the early nineteenth century, federal law had prohibited the sale of alcohol to reservation Indians, either on or off the reservation. Likewise, federal laws restricted the sale and use of firearms by Indians. Indian soldiers had been able to order alcoholic beverages in bars around the world during the war and certainly had shown great proficiency in the responsible use of firearms. After the war, Indian veterans were unwilling to have these rights denied at home. "Look," said one disabled veteran, "I have a false eye, checkbone, a silver plate in my head, but I can't buy liquor in a bar like any American." Legislation to lift the restrictions was introduced in Congress shortly after the war, but not until 1953 did the federal government permit Indians to purchase liquor and firearms on and off the reservation.

These early postwar battles showed the renewed determination of Native Americans to participate fully in the rights and privileges of American society. Yet many Indians were equally determined to preserve and defend their own traditional cultures. At home and abroad,

the war unleashed forces that hastened assimilation and also encouraged a revival of traditional cultures. Indians who served in the armed forces and worked in the defense industries were convinced they had demonstrated their loyalty and good citizenship beyond any reasonable doubt. At least 550 Indians had been killed during World War II and another 700 were wounded in action. For their meritorious wartime service, Indians received seventy-one Air Medals, fifty-one Silver Stars, forty-seven Bronze Stars, and two Congressional Medals of Honor. These Indian warriors, who had so valiantly defended their country in its time of greatest peril, expected now to enjoy the full fruits of their victory, to be able to keep what was best from their own world even as they moved into the larger world around them.

SOURCES AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

The most comprehensive survey of the changing image of Native Americans is Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (1978). Also important for this chapter are two articles in Wilcomb E. Washburn, ed., *History of Indian-White Relations*, vol. 4, *Handbook of North American Indians* (1988): Rayna D. Green, "The Indian in Popular American Culture"; and Michael T. Marsden and Jack G. Nachbar, "The Indian in the Movies." See also Gretchen Battalle and Charles I. P. Silet, eds., *The Pretend Indians: Images of Native Americans in the Movies* (1980); Raymond W. Stedman, *Shadows of the Indian: Stereotypes in American Culture* (1982); and Angela Aleiss and Robert Appelford, "The Indian in Film," in Duane Champagne, ed., *The Native North American Almanac* (1994).

Most of the material in this chapter on the wartime experiences of Native Americans, including many of the direct quotations, is drawn from the definitive study by Alison R. Bernstein, *American Indians and World War II: Toward a New Era in Indian Affairs* (1991). The chapter's discussion of the role of the code talkers is based on the single most complete account of the Navajo contribution to the war, Doris A. Paul, *The Navajo Code Talkers* (1973), available from Dorance Publishing Co., Inc., 643 Smithfield Street, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15222. See also Lynn Escue, "Navajo Talkers and the Pacific War," *History Today* (July 1991); Margaret T. Bixler, *Winds of Freedom: The Story of the Navajo Code Talkers of World War II* (1993); and the remarkable collection of photographs in Kenji Kawano, *Warriors* (1990).

Gerald D. Nash, *The American West Transformed: The Impact of the Second World War* (1985) provides the larger context for this chapter and was the initial starting point for its conceptualization. Also useful are the firsthand accounts of wartime experiences in Peter Nabokov, ed., *Native American Testimony: A Chronicle of Indian-White Relations from Prophecy to the Present, 1492-1992* (1991). Brief summaries of the changes wrought by World War II appear in Donald L. Fixico, "Dislocated," in Philip Weeks, ed., *The American Indian Experience: A Profile 1524 to the Present* (1988) and William T. Hagan, *American Indians* (1993).